UNDINE

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THE FOUR SEASONS.

UNDINE AND OTHER TALES.

BY

FRIEDRICH, BARON DE LA MOTTE FOUQUÉ.

UNDINE, THE TWO CAPTAINS, ASLAUGA'S KNIGHT, SINTRAM AND HIS COMPANIONS.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY H. W. HERRICK.

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UNDINE.

CONTENTS.

PAGE

CHAPTER I.

How the Knight came to the Fisherman's Cottage 1

CHAPTER II.

How Undine first came to the Fisherman . . 9

CHAPTER III.

How they found Undine again 16

CHAPTER IV.

Of what had befallen the Knight in the Forest 21

CHAPTER V.

Of the Life which the Knight led on the Island . 29

CHAPTER VI.

Of a Bridal 35

CHAPTER VII.

How the rest of the Evening passed away . . 42

CHAPTER VIII.

The Day after the Marriage 46

CHAPTER IX.

How the Knight and his young Bride departed . 53

CHAPTER X.

PAGE

Of their Way of Life in the Town 59

CHAPTER XI.

Bertalda's Birthday 64

CHAPTER XII.

How they left the Imperial City 71

CHAPTER XIII.

How they lived in the Castle of Ringstetten . 76

CHAPTER XIV.

How Bertalda drove Home with the Knight . 85

CHAPTER XV.

The Trip to Vienna 93

CHAPTER XVI

Of what befell Huldbrand afterwards . . 100

CHAPTER XVII.

The Knight's Dream 105

CHAPTER XVIII.

Of the Knight Huldbrand's second Bridal . . 108

CHAPTER XIX.

How the Knight Huldbrand was Interred . . 114

UNDINE.

CHAPTER I.

HOW THE KNIGHT CAME TO THE FISHERMAN'S COTTAGE.

Once — it may be some hundreds of years ago — there lived a good old Fisherman, who, on a fine summer's evening, was sitting before the door mending his nets. He dwelt in a land of exceeding beauty. The green slope, upon which he had built his hut, stretched far out into a great lake; and it seemed either that the cape, enamored of the glassy blue waters, had pressed forward into their bosom, or that the lake had lovingly folded in its arms the blooming promontory, with her waving grass and flowers, and the refreshing shade of her tall trees. Each bade the other welcome, and increased its own beauty by so doing. This lovely nook was scarcely ever visited by mankind, except by the Fisherman and his family. For behind the promontory lay a very wild forest, which, besides being gloomy and pathless, had too bad a name as

the resort of wondrous spirits and goblins, to be crossed by any one who could help it. Yet the pious old Fisherman went through it without being molested, whenever he walked to a large city beyond the forest, to dispose of the costly fish that he caught in the lake. For him, indeed, there was little danger, even in that forest; for his thoughts were almost all thoughts of devotion, and his custom was to carol forth to Heaven a loud and heartfelt hymn, on first setting foot within the treacherous shades.

As he sat this evening most peacefully over his nets, he was startled in an unwonted manner by a rustling sound in the forest, like that of a man and horse; and the noise came nearer and nearer. The dreams he had had in many a stormy night of the spirits of the forest started up before his mind, particularly the image of a gigantic long snow-white man, who kept nodding his head mysteriously. Nay, as he raised his eyes and looked into the forest, he could fancy he saw, through the thick screen of leaves, the nodding creature advance toward him. But he soon composed himself, recollecting that even in the heart of the woods nothing had ever befallen him; much less here, in the open air, could the bad spirits have power to touch him. He moreover repeated a text from the Bible aloud and earnestly, which quite restored his courage, and he almost laughed to see how his fancy had misled him. The white nodding man suddenly resolved himself into a little brook he knew of old, which gushed

bubbling out of the wood, and emptied itself into the lake. And the rustling had been caused by a horseman in gorgeous attire, who now came forward toward the hut from beneath the trees.

He wore a scarlet mantle over his purple, gold-embroidered jerkin; a plume of red and purple feathers waved over his gold-colored barret-cap; and from his golden belt hung a glittering jeweled sword. The white courser which carried him was of lighter make than the generality of chargers, and trod so airily, that the enameled turf seemed scarcely to bend under him. The aged Fisherman could not quite shake off his uneasiness, although he told himself that so noble a guest could bring him no harm, and accordingly doffed his hat courteously, and interrupted his work when he approached.

The Knight reined in his horse, and asked whether they could both obtain one night's shelter.

"As to your horse, good sir," answered the Fisherman, "I have no better stable to offer him than the shady meadow, and no provender but the grass which grows upon it. But you shall yourself be heartily welcome to my poor house, and to the best of my supper and night lodging."

The stranger seemed quite content; he dismounted, and they helped each other to take off the horse's girth and saddle, after which the Knight let him graze on the flowery pasture, saying to his host, "Even if I had found you less kind and hospitable, my good old man, you must have borne with me till

to-morrow; for I see we are shut in by a wide lake, and Heaven forbid that I should cross the haunted forest again at nightfall!"

"We will not say much about that," replied the Fisherman; and he led his guest into the cottage.

There, close by the hearth, from whence a scanty fire shed its glimmering light over the clean little room, sat the Fisherman's old wife. When their noble guest came in, she rose to give him a kind welcome, but immediately resumed her place of honor, without offering it to him; and the Fisherman said with a smile: "Do not take it amiss, young sir, if she does not give up to you the most comfortable place; it is the custom among us poor people, that it should always belong to the oldest."

"Why, husband!" said his wife quietly, "what are you thinking of? Our guest is surely a Christian gentleman, and how could it come into his kind young heart to turn old people out of their places? Sit down, my young lord," added she, turning to the Knight; "there stands a very comfortable chair for you; only remember it must not be too roughly handled, for one leg is not so steady as it has been." The Knight drew the chair carefully forward, seated himself sociably, and soon felt quite at home in this little household, and as if he had just returned to it from a far journey.

The three friends began to converse openly and familiarly together. First the Knight asked a few questions about the forest, but the old man would

not say much of that; least of all, said he, was it fitting to talk of such things at nightfall; but, on household concerns, and their own way of life, the old folks talked readily; and were pleased when the Knight told them of his travels, and that he had a castle near the source of the Danube, and that his name was Lord Huldbrand of Ringstetten. In the middle of their discourse, the stranger often observed a noise outside the small window, as if some one were dashing water against it. The old man knit his brows and looked grave whenever this occurred; at last, when a great splash of water came full against the panes, and some found its way into the room, he could bear it no longer, but started up, crying, "Undine! will you never leave off these childish tricks, — when we have a stranger gentleman in the house too!" This produced silence outside, all but a sound of suppressed giggling, and the Fisherman said as he came back: "My honored guest, you must put up with this, and perhaps with many another piece of mischief; but she means no harm. It is our adopted child Undine; there is no breaking her of her childish ways, though she is eighteen years old now. But as I told you she is as good a child as ever lived, at bottom."

"Ay, so you may say!" rejoined his wife, shaking her head. "When you come home from fishing, or from a journey, her playful nonsense may be pleasant enough. But, to be keeping her out of mischief all day long, as I must do, and never get a

word of sense from her, nor a bit of help and comfort in my old age, is enough to weary the patience of a saint."

"Well, well," said the good man, "you feel toward Undine as I do toward the lake. Though its waves are apt enough to burst my banks and my nets, yet I love them for all that, and so do you love our pretty wench, with all her plaguy tricks. Don't you?"

"Why, one cannot be really angry with her, to be sure," said the dame smiling.

Here the door flew open, and a beautiful fair creature tripped in, and said, playfully: "Well, father, you made game of me; where is your guest?" The next moment she perceived the Knight, and stood fixed in mute admiration; while Huldbrand gazed upon her lovely form, and tried to impress her image on his mind, thinking that he must avail himself of her amazement to do so, and that in a moment she would shrink away in a fit of bashfulness. But it proved otherwise. After looking at him a good while, she came up to him familiarly, knelt down beside him, and playing with a golden medal that hung from his rich chain, she said: "So, thou kind, thou beautiful guest! hast thou found us out in our poor hut at last? Why didst thou roam the world so many years without coming near us? Art come through the wild forest, my handsome friend?" The old woman allowed him no time to answer. She desired her to get up instantly, like a modest

girl, and to set about her work. But Undine, without replying, fetched a footstool and put it close to Huldbrand's chair, sat down there with her spinning, and said cheerfully, — "I will sit and work here." The old man behaved as parents are apt to do with spoilt children. He pretended not to see Undine's waywardness, and was beginning to talk of something else; but she would not let him. She said, "I asked our visitor where he came from, and he has not answered me yet."

"From the forest I came, you beautiful sprite," answered Huldbrand; and she continued: —

"Then you must tell me how you came there, and what wonderful adventures you had in it, for I know that nobody can escape without some."

Huldbrand could not help shuddering on being reminded of his adventures, and involuntarily glanced at the window, half expecting to see one of the strange beings he had encountered in the forest grinning at him through it; but nothing was to be seen except the deep black night, which had now closed in. He recollected himself, and was just beginning his narrative, when the old man interposed: "Not just now, Sir Knight; this is no time for such tales."

But Undine jumped up passionately, put her beautiful arms akimbo, and standing before the Fisherman, exclaimed: "What! may not he tell his story, father — may not he? But I will have it; he must! He shall indeed!" And she stamped angrily with

her pretty feet, but it was all done in so comical and graceful a manner, that Huldbrand thought her still more bewitching in her wrath, than in her playful mood.

Not so the old man; his long-restrained anger burst out uncontrolled. He scolded Undine smartly for her disobedience, and unmannerly conduct to the stranger, his wife chiming in.

Undine then said: "Very well, if you will be quarrelsome, and not let me have my own way, you may sleep alone in your smoky old hut!" and she shot through the door like an arrow, and rushed into the dark night.

CHAPTER II.

HOW UNDINE FIRST CAME TO THE FISHERMAN.

HULDBRAND and the Fisherman sprang from their seats, and tried to catch the angry maiden; but before they could reach the house door, Undine had vanished far into the thick shades, and not a sound of her light footsteps was to be heard, by which to track her course. Huldbrand looked doubtfully at his host; he almost thought that the whole fair vision which had so suddenly plunged into the night, must be a continuation of the phantom play which had whirled around him in his passage through the forest. But the old man mumbled through his teeth: "It is not the first time she has served us so. And here are we, left in our anxiety, with a sleepless night before us; for who can tell what harm may befall her, all alone out-of-doors till daybreak?"

"Then let us be after her, good father, for God's sake!" cried Huldbrand, eagerly.

The old man replied, "Where would be the use? It were a sin to let you set off alone in pursuit of the foolish girl, and my old legs would never overtake such a Will-with-the-wisp — even if we could guess which way she is gone."

"At least let us call her, and beg her to come back," said Huldbrand; and he began calling after her in most moving tones: "Undine! O Undine! do return!"

The old man shook his head, and said that all the shouting in the world would do no good with such a willful little thing. But yet he could not himself help calling out from time to time in the darkness: "Undine! ah, sweet Undine! I entreat thee, come back this once."

The Fisherman's words proved true. Nothing was to be seen or heard of Undine; and as her foster-father would by no means suffer Huldbrand to pursue her, they had nothing for it but to go in again. They found the fire on the hearth nearly burnt out, and the dame, who did not take to heart Undine's flight and danger so much as her husband, was gone to bed. The old man blew the coals, laid on dry wood, and by the light of the reviving flames he found a flagon of wine, which he put between himself and his guest. "You are uneasy about that silly wench, Sir Knight," said he, "and we had better kill part of the night chatting and drinking, than toss about in our beds, trying to sleep in vain. Had not we?"

Huldbrand agreed; the Fisherman made him sit in his wife's empty arm-chair, and they both drank and talked together, as a couple of worthy friends should do. Whenever, indeed, there was the least stir outside the window, or even sometimes without

any, one of them would look up and say, "There she comes." Then they would keep silence for a few moments, and as nothing came, resume their conversation, with a shake of the head and a sigh.

But as neither could think of much besides Undine, the best means they could devise for beguiling the time was, that the Fisherman should relate, and the Knight listen to, the history of her first coming to the cottage. He began as follows: —

"One day, some fifteen years ago, I was carrying my fish through that dreary wood to the town. My wife stayed at home, as usual; and at that time she had a good and pretty reason for it; — the Lord had bestowed upon us (old as we already were) a lovely babe. It was a girl; and so anxious were we to do our best for the little treasure, that we began to talk of leaving our beautiful home, in order to give our darling a good education among other human beings. With us poor folks, wishing is one thing, and doing is quite another, Sir Knight; but what then? we can only try our best. Well then, as I plodded on, I turned over the scheme in my head. I was loth to leave our own dear nook, and it made me shudder to think, in the din and brawls of the town, So it is here we shall soon live, or in some place nearly as bad! Yet I never murmured against our good God, but rather thanked Him in secret for His last blessing; nor can I say that I met with any thing extraordinary in the forest, either coming or going; indeed nothing to frighten me has ever crossed my path. The Lord was ever with me in the awful shades."

Here he uncovered his bald head, and sat for a time in silent prayer; then putting his cap on again, he continued: "On this side of the wood it was, — on this side, that the sad news met me. My wife came toward me with eyes streaming like two fountains; she was in deep mourning. 'Oh, good Heaven!' I called out, 'where is our dear child? Tell me?'

"'Gone, dear husband,' she replied; and we went into our cottage together, weeping silently. I looked for the little corpse, and then first heard how it had happened. My wife had been sitting on the shore with the child, and playing with it, all peace and happiness; when the babe all at once leaned over, as if she saw something most beautiful in the water; there she sat smiling, sweet angel! and stretching out her little hands; but the next moment she darted suddenly out of her arms, and down into the smooth waters. I made much search for the poor little corpse; but in vain; not a trace of her could I find.

"When evening was come, we childless parents were sitting together in the hut, silent; neither of us had a mind to speak, even if the tears had let us. We were looking idly into the fire. Just then something made a noise at the door. It opened, and a beautiful little maid, of three or four years old, stood there gayly dressed, and smiling in our faces. We were struck dumb with surprise, and at first hardly knew if she were a little human being, or

only an empty shadow. But I soon saw that her golden hair and gay clothes were dripping wet, and it struck me the little fairy must have been in the water, and distressed for help. 'Wife,' said I, 'our dear child had no friend to save her; shall we not do for others what would have made our remaining days so happy, if any one had done it for us?' We undressed the child, put her to bed, and gave her a warm drink, while she never said a word, but kept smiling at us with her sky-blue eyes.

"The next morning we found that she had done herself no harm; and I asked her who were her parents, and what had brought her here; but she gave me a strange, confused answer. I am sure she must have been born far away, for these fifteen years have we kept her, without ever finding out where she came from; and besides, she is apt to let drop such marvelous things in her talk, that you might think she had lived in the moon. She will speak of golden castles, of crystal roofs, and I can't tell what besides. The only thing she has told us clearly, is, that as she was sailing on the lake with her mother, she fell into the water, and when she recovered her senses found herself lying under these trees, in safety and comfort, upon our pretty shore.

"So now we had a serious, anxious charge thrown upon us. To keep and bring up the foundling, instead of our poor drowned child, — that was soon resolved upon; but who should tell us if she had yet been baptized or no? She knew not how to an-

swer the question. That she was one of God's creatures, made for His glory and service, that much she knew; and any thing that would glorify and please Him, she was willing to have done. So my wife and I said to each other: 'If she has never been baptized, there is no doubt it should be done; and if she has, better do too much than too little, in a matter of such consequence.' We therefore began to seek a good name for the child. Dorothea seemed to us the best; for I had once heard that meant God's gift; and she had indeed been sent us by Him as a special blessing, to comfort us in our misery. But she would not hear of that name. She said Undine was what her parents used to call her, and Undine she would still be. That, I thought, sounded like a heathen name, and occurred in no Calendar; and I took counsel with a priest in the town about it. He also objected to the name Undine; and at my earnest request, came home with me, through the dark forest, in order to baptize her. The little creature stood before us, looking so gay and charming in her holiday clothes, that the priest's heart warmed toward her; and what with coaxing and willfulness, she got the better of him, so that he clean forgot all the objections he had thought of to the name Undine. She was therefore so christened, and behaved particularly well and decently during the sacred rite, wild and unruly as she had always been before. For, what my wife said just now was too true — we have indeed found her the wildest little fairy! If I were to tell you all" —

Here the Knight interrupted the Fisherman, to call his attention to a sound of roaring waters, which he had noticed already in the pauses of the old man's speech, and which now rose in fury as it rushed past the windows. They both ran to the door. By the light of the newly risen moon, they saw the brook which gushed out of the forest breaking wildly over its banks, and whirling along stones and branches in its eddying course. A storm, as if awakened by the uproar, burst from the heavy clouds that were chasing each other across the moon; the lake howled under the wings of the wind; the trees on the shore groaned from top to bottom, and bowed themselves over the rushing waters. "Undine! for God's sake, Undine!" cried the Knight, and the old man. No answer was to be heard; and, heedless now of any danger to themselves, they ran off in different directions, calling her in frantic anxiety.

CHAPTER III.

HOW THEY FOUND UNDINE AGAIN.

THE longer Huldbrand wandered in vain pursuit of Undine, the more bewildered he became. The idea that she might be a mere spirit of the woods, sometimes returned upon him with double force; nay, amid the howling of waves and storm, the groaning of trees, and the wild commotion of the once-peaceful spot, he might have fancied the whole promontory, its hut and its inhabitants, to be a delusion of magic, but that he still heard in the distance the Fisherman's piteous cries of "Undine!" and the old housewife's loud prayers and hymns, above the whistling of the blast.

At last he found himself on the margin of the overflowing stream, and saw it by the moonlight rushing violently along, close to the edge of the mysterious forest, so as to make an island of the peninsula on which he stood. "Gracious Heaven!" thought he, "Undine may have ventured a step or two into that awful forest, — perhaps in her pretty waywardness, just because I would not tell her my story — and the swoln stream has cut her off, and left her weeping alone among the spectres!" A cry

of terror escaped him, and he clambered down the bank by means of some stones and fallen trees, hoping to wade or swim across the flood, and seek the fugitive beyond it. Fearful and unearthly visions did indeed float before him, like those he had met with in the morning, beneath these groaning, tossing branches. Especially he was haunted by the appearance of a tall white man, whom he remembered but too well, grinning and nodding at him from the opposite bank; however, the thought of these grim monsters did but urge him onward as he recollected Undine, now perhaps in deadly fear among them, and alone.

He had laid hold of a stout pine branch, and leaning on it, was standing in the eddy, though scarcely able to stem it, but he stepped boldly forward — when a sweet voice exclaimed close behind him: "Trust him not — trust not! The old fellow is tricksy — the stream!"

Well he knew those silver tones: the moon was just disappearing behind a cloud, and he stood amid the deepening shades, made dizzy as the water shot by him with the speed of an arrow. Yet he would not desist. "And if thou art not truly there, if thou flittest before me an empty shadow, I care not to live; I will melt into air like thee, my beloved Undine!" This he cried aloud, and strode further into the flood.

"Look round then, — look round, fair youth!" he heard just behind him, and looking round, he be-

held by the returning moonbeams, on a fair island left by the flood, under some thickly interlaced branches, Undine all smiles and loveliness, nestling in the flowery grass. How much more joyfully than before did the young man use his pine staff to cross the waters! A few strides brought him through the flood that had parted them; and he found himself at her side, on the nook of soft grass, securely sheltered under the shade of the old trees. Undine half arose, and twined her arms round his neck in the green arbor, making him sit down by her on the turf. "Here you shall tell me all, my own friend," said she in a low whisper; "the cross old folks cannot overhear us. And our pretty bower of leaves is well worth their wretched hut."

"This is heaven!" cried Huldbrand, as he clasped in his arms the beautiful flatterer.

Meantime the old man had reached the banks of the stream, and he called out: "So, Sir Knight, when I had made you welcome, as one honest man should another, here are you making love to my adopted child, — to say nothing of your leaving me to seek her, alone and terrified, all night."

"I have but this moment found her, old man!" cried the Knight in reply.

"Well, I am glad of that," said the Fisherman; "now then bring her back to me at once."

But Undine would not hear of it. She had rather, she said, go quite away into the wild woods with the handsome stranger, than return to the hut, where

she had never had her own way, and which the Knight must sooner or later leave. Embracing Huldbrand, she sang with peculiar charm and grace: —

> "From misty cave the mountain wave
> Leapt out and sought the main!
> The Ocean's foam she made her home,
> And ne'er returned again."

The old man wept bitterly as she sang, but this did not seem to move her. She continued to caress her lover, till at length he said: "Undine, the poor old man's grief goes to my heart, if not to yours. Let us go back to him."

Astonished, she raised her large blue eyes toward him, and after a pause answered slowly and reluctantly: "To please you, I will: whatever you like pleases me too. But the old man yonder must first promise me that he will let you tell me all you saw in the forest, and the rest we shall see about."

"Only come back,— do come!" cried the Fisherman, and not another word could he say. At the same moment he stretched his arms over the stream toward her, and nodded his head by way of giving her the desired promise; and as his white hair fell over his face, it gave him a strange look, and reminded Huldbrand involuntarily of the nodding white man in the woods. Determined, however, that nothing should stop him, the young Knight took the fair damsel in his arms, and carried her through the short space of foaming flood, which divided the

island from the main-land. The old man fell upon Undine's neck, and rejoiced, and kissed her in the fullness of his heart; his aged wife also came up, and welcomed their recovered child most warmly. All reproaches were forgotten; the more so, as Undine seemed to have left her sauciness behind, and overwhelmed her foster parents with kind words and caresses.

When these transports of joy had subsided, and they began to look about them, the rosy dawn was just shedding its glow over the lake, the storm had ceased, and the birds were singing merrily on the wet branches. As Undine insisted upon hearing the story of the Knight's adventure, both the old folks cheerfully indulged her. Breakfast was set out under the trees between the cottage and the lake, and they sat down before it with glad hearts, Undine placing herself resolutely on the grass at the Knight's feet. Huldbrand began his narrative as follows.

CHAPTER IV.

OF WHAT HAD BEFALLEN THE KNIGHT IN THE FOREST.

"About eight days ago, I rode into the imperial city beyond this forest. A grand tournament and tilting was held there, and I spared neither lance nor steed. As I stood still a moment to rest myself, in a pause of the noble game, and had just given my helmet in charge to a squire, my eye fell upon a most beautiful woman, who stood, richly adorned, in one of the galleries, looking on. I inquired her name, and found that this charming lady was Bertalda, the adopted daughter of one of the principal lords in the neighborhood. I observed that her eye was upon me too, and as is the way with us young knights, I had not been slack before, but I now fought more bravely still. That evening I was Bertalda's partner in the dance, and so I was again every evening during the jousting."

Here a sudden pain in his left hand, which hung beside him, checked the Knight in his tale, and he looked at his hand. Undine's pearly teeth had bitten one of his fingers sharply, and she looked very black at him. But the next moment that look

changed into an expression of tender sadness, and she whispered low: "So you are faithless too!" Then she hid her face in her hands, and the Knight proceeded with his tale, although staggered and perplexed.

"That Bertalda is a high-spirited, extraordinary maid. On the second day she charmed me far less than the first, and on the third, less still. But I remained with her, because she was more gracious to me than to any other knight, and so it fell out that I asked her in jest for one of her gloves. 'You shall have it,' said she, 'if you will visit the haunted forest alone, and bring me an account of it.' It was not that I cared much for her glove, but the words had been spoken, and a knight that loves his fame does not wait to be twice urged to such a feat."

"I thought she had loved you," interrupted Undine.

"It looked like it," he replied.

"Well," cried the maiden, laughing, "she must be a fool indeed! To drive *him* away whom she loves! and into a haunted forest besides! The forest and its mysteries might have waited long enough, for me."

"I set out yesterday morning," continued the Knight, smiling kindly at Undine. "The stems of the trees looked so bright in the morning sunshine, as it played upon the green turf, and the leaves whispered together so pleasantly, that I could not but laugh at those who imagined any evil to lurk in

such a beautiful place. I shall very soon have ridden through it and back again, thought I, pushing on cheerily, and before I was aware of it, I found myself in the depths of its leafy shades, and the plains behind me far out of sight. It then occurred to me that I was likely enough to lose my way in this wilderness of trees, and that this might be the only real danger to which the traveller was here exposed. So I halted, and took notice of the course of the sun; it was now high in the heavens.

"On looking up, I saw something black among the boughs of a tall oak. I took it for a bear, and seized my rifle; but it addressed me in a human voice, most hoarse and grating, saying: 'If I did not break off the twigs up here, what should we do to-night for fuel to roast you with, Sir Simpleton?' And he gnashed his teeth, and rattled the boughs, so as to startle my horse, which ran away with me before I could make out what kind of a devil it was."

"You should not mention *his* name," said the Fisherman, crossing himself; his wife silently did the same, while Undine turned her beaming eyes upon her lover, and said,—

"He is safe now; it is well they did not really roast him. Go on, pretty youth."

He continued: "My terrified horse had almost dashed me against many a trunk and branch; he was running down with fright and heat, and yet there was no stopping him. At length he rushed

madly toward the brink of a stony precipice; but here, as it seemed to me, a tall white man threw himself across the plunging animal's path, and made him start back, and stop. I then recovered the control of him, and found that, instead of a white man, my preserver was no other than a bright silvery brook, which gushed down from a hill beside me, checking and crossing my horse in his course."

"Thanks, dear brook!" cried Undine, clapping her hands. But the old man shook his head, and seemed lost in thought.

"Scarcely had I settled myself in the saddle, and got firm hold of my reins again," proceeded Huldbrand, "when an extraordinary little man sprang up beside me, wizen and hideous beyond measure; he was of a yellow-brown hue, and his nose almost as big as the whole of his body. He grinned at me in the most fulsome way with his wide mouth, bowing and scraping every moment. As I could not abide these antics, I thanked him abruptly, pulled my still-trembling horse another way, and thought I would seek some other adventure, or perhaps go home; for during my wild gallop the sun had passed his meridian, and was now declining westward. But the little imp sprang round like lightning, and stood in front of my horse again.

"'Make way!' cried I impatiently, 'the animal is unruly, and may run over you.'"

"'Oh,' snarled the imp, with a laugh more disgusting than before, 'first give me a piece of coin for

having caught your horse so nicely; but for me, you and your pretty beast would be lying in the pit down yonder: whew!'

"'Only have done with your grimaces,' said I, 'and take your money along with you, though it is all a lie: look there, it was that honest brook that saved me, not you — you pitiful wretch!' So saying, I dropped a gold coin into his comical cap, which he held out toward me like a beggar.

"I trotted on, but he still followed, screaming, and, with inconceivable rapidity, whisked up to my side. I put my horse into a gallop; he kept pace with me, though with much difficulty, and twisted his body into various frightful and ridiculous attitudes, crying at each step as he held up the money: 'Bad coin! bad gold! bad gold! bad coin!' And this he shrieked in such a ghastly tone, that you would have expected him to drop down dead after each cry.

"At last I stopped, much vexed, and asked, 'What do you want, with your shrieks? Take another gold coin; take two if you will, only let me alone.'

"He began his odious smirking again, and snarled, 'It 's not gold, it 's not gold that I want, young gentleman; I have rather more of that than I can use: you shall see.'

"All at once the surface of the ground became transparent; it looked like a smooth globe of green glass, and within it I saw a crowd of goblins at play

with silver and gold. Tumbling about, head over heels, they pelted each other in sport, making a toy of the precious metals, and powdering their faces with gold-dust. My ugly companion stood half above, half below the surface; he made the others reach up to him quantities of gold, and showed it me laughing, and then flung it into the fathomless depths beneath. He displayed the piece of gold I had given him to the goblins below, who held their sides with laughing, and hissed at me in scorn. At length all their bony fingers pointed at me together; and louder and louder, closer and closer, wilder and wilder grew the turmoil, as it rose toward me, till not my horse only, but I myself was terrified; I put spurs into him, and cannot tell how long I may have scoured the forest this time.

"When at last I halted, the shades of evening had closed in. Through the branches I saw a white foot-path gleaming, and hoped it must be a road out of the forest to the town. I resolved to work my way thither; but lo! an indistinct, dead-white face, with ever-changing features, peeped at me through the leaves; I tried to avoid it, but wherever I went, there it was. Provoked, I attempted to push my horse against it; then it splashed us both over with white foam, and we turned away, blinded for the moment. So it drove us, step by step, further and further from the footpath, and indeed never letting us go on undisturbed but in one direction. While we kept to this, it was close upon our heels, but did

not thwart us. Having looked round once or twice, I observed that the white foaming head was placed on a gigantic body, equally white. I sometimes doubted my first impression, and thought it merely a water-fall, but I never could satisfy myself that it was so. Wearily did my horse and I precede this active white pursuer, who often nodded at us, as if saying, 'That's right! that's right!' and it ended by our issuing from the wood here, where I rejoiced to see your lawn, the lake, and this cottage, and where the long white man vanished."

"Thank Heaven, he is gone," said the old man, and he then proceeded to consider how his guest could best return to his friends in the city. Upon this, Undine was heard to laugh in a whisper.

Huldbrand observed it, and said: "I thought you had wished me to stay; and now you seem pleased when we talk of my going?"

"Because," replied Undine, "you cannot get away. Only try to cross the swollen brook, in a boat, on horseback, or on foot. Or rather, do not try, for you would be dashed to pieces by the branches and stones that it hurls along. And as to the lake, I know how that is: father never ventures across it in his boat."

Huldbrand laughed, and got up to see whether she had spoken true; the old man went with him, and the maiden tripped along playfully by their side. They found she had told them no worse than the truth, and the Knight resigned himself to staying in

Having found an old cross-bow in a corner of the cottage, and mended it, he spent part of his days roving about, waylaying the birds that flew by, and bringing whatever he killed to the kitchen, as rare game. When he came back laden with spoil, Undine would often scold him for taking the life of the dear little joyous creatures, soaring in the blue depths of Heaven; she would even weep bitterly over the dead birds. But if he came home empty-handed, she found fault with his awkwardness and laziness, which obliged them to be content with fish and crabs for dinner. Either way, he took delight in her pretty fits of anger; the more so as she rarely failed to make up for them by the fondest caresses afterwards. The old folks, having been in the young people's confidence from the first, unconsciously looked upon them as a betrothed or even married pair, shut out from the world with them in this retreat, and bestowed upon them for comforts in their old age. And this very seclusion helped to make the young Knight feel as if he were already Undine's bridegroom. It seemed to him that the whole world was contained within the surrounding waters, or at any rate, that he could never more cross that charmed boundary, and rejoin other human beings And if at times the neighing of his steed reminded him of former feats of chivalry, and seemed to ask for more; if his coat of arms, embroidered on the saddle and trappings, caught his eye; or if his good sword fell from the nail on which he had hung it,

and slipped out of its scabbard, he would silence the misgivings that arose, by thinking, Undine is not a fisherman's daughter, but most likely sprung from some highly noble family in distant lands. The only thing that ever ruffled him, was to hear the old woman scolding Undine. The wayward girl only laughed at her; but to him it seemed as if his own honor were touched; and yet he could not blame the good wife, for Undine mostly deserved ten times worse than she got, therefore he still felt kindly toward the old dame, and these little rubs scarcely disturbed the even current of their lives.

At length, however, a grievance did arise. The Knight and the Fisherman were in the habit of sitting cheerfully over a flask of wine, both at noon, and also at eventide while the wind whistled around, as it generally did at night. But they had now exhausted the whole stock which the Fisherman had, long since, brought from the town with him, and they both missed it sadly. Undine laughed at them all day for it, but they could not join in her mirth as heartily as usual. Toward evening she left the cottage, saying she could no longer bear such long, dismal faces. As the twilight looked stormy, and the waters were beginning to moan and heave, the Knight and the old man ran out anxiously to fetch her back, remembering the agony of that night when Huldbrand first came to the cottage. But they were met by Undine, clapping her hands merrily. "What will you give me if I get you some wine?

But, indeed, I want no reward for it," she added; " I shall be satisfied if you will but look brighter, and find more to say than you have done all these tedious mornings. Come along; the floods have washed a barrel ashore, and I will engage to sleep a whole week through if it is not a barrel of wine!"

The men both followed her to a shady creek, and there found a barrel, which did look as if it contained the generous liquor which they longed for. They rolled it toward the hut as fast as they could, for a heavy storm seemed stalking across the sky, and there was light enough left to show them the waves of the lake tossing up their foaming heads, as if looking out for the rain which would soon pour down upon them. Undine lent a hand in the work, and presently, when the shower threatened to break instantly over their heads, she spoke to the big clouds in playful defiance: "You, you there! mind you do not give us a drenching; we are some way from home yet." The old man admonished her that this was sinful presumption, but she laughed slyly to herself, and no harm came of it. Beyond their hopes, they all three reached the comfortable fireside with their prize, unhurt; and it was not till they had opened the barrel, and found it to contain excellent wine, that the rain broke from the heavy clouds in torrents, and they heard the storm roaring among the trees, and over the lake's heaving billows.

A few bottles were soon filled from the great barrel, enough to last them several days; and they

sat sipping and chatting over the bright fire, secure from the raging tempest. But the old man's heart presently smote him. "Dear me," said he, "here are we making merry over the blessing of Providence, while the owner of it has perhaps been carried away by the flood, and lost his life!" — "No, that he has not," said Undine, smiling; and she filled the Knight's glass again. He replied, "I give you my word, good father, that if I knew how to find and save him, no danger should deter me; I would not shrink from setting out in this darkness. This much I promise you, if ever I set foot in an inhabited country again, I will make inquiry after him or his heirs, and restore to them twice or three times the value of the wine." This pleased the old man; he gave an approving nod to the Knight, and drained his glass with a better conscience and a lighter heart. But Undine said to Huldbrand, "Do as you like with your money, you may make what compensation you please; but as to setting out and wandering after him, that was hastily said. I should cry my heart out if we chanced to lose you; and had not you rather stay with me and with the good wine?" "Why, yes!" said Huldbrand, laughing. "Well then," rejoined Undine, "it was a foolish thing you talked of doing; charity begins at home, you know." The old woman turned away, shaking her head and sighing; her husband forgot his usual indulgence for the pretty lassie, and reproved her sharply. "One would think," said he, "you had been reared by

Turks and heathens; God forgive you and us, you perverse child."—"Ay but it *is* my way of thinking," pursued Undine, "whoever has reared me, so what is the use of your talking?"—"Peace!" cried the Fisherman; and she, who with all her wildness was sometimes cowed in a moment, clung trembling to Huldbrand, and whispered, "And are you angry with me, dear friend?" The Knight pressed her soft hand, and stroked down her ringlets. Not a word could he say; his distress at the old man's harshness toward Undine had sealed his lips; and so each couple remained sitting opposite the other, in moody silence and constraint.

CHAPTER VI.

OF A BRIDAL.

A GENTLE tap at the door broke the silence, and made them all start: it sometimes happens that a mere trifle, coming quite unexpectedly, strikes the senses with terror. They looked at each other, hesitating; the tap was repeated, accompanied by a deep groan; and the Knight grasped his sword. But the old man muttered, "If it is what I fear, it is not a sword that will help us!" Undine, however, stepped forward to the door, and said boldly and sharply, "If you are after any mischief, you spirits of earth, Kühleborn shall teach you manners."

The terror of the others increased at these strange words; they looked at the maiden with awe, and Huldbrand was just mustering courage to ask her a question, when a voice answered her from without: "I am no spirit of earth; call me, if you will, a spirit pent in mortal clay. If you fear God, and will be charitable, you dwellers in the cottage, open the door to me." Undine opened it before he had done speaking, and held out a lamp into the stormy night, so as to show them the figure of an aged Priest, who started back as the radiant beauty of

Undine flashed upon his sight. Well might he suspect magic and witchery, when so bright a vision shone out of a mean-looking cottage; he accordingly began a canticle, "All good spirits give praise to the Lord!"

"I am no ghost," said Undine, smiling; "am I so frightful to behold? And you may see that a pious saying has no terrors for me. I worship God, too, and praise Him after my own fashion; He has not created us all alike. Come in, venerable father; you will find worthy folks here."

The holy man walked in, bowing and casting his eyes around, and looking most mild and venerable. Every fold of his dark garment was dripping with water, and so were his long white beard and hoary locks. The Fisherman and the Knight led him to a bedroom, and gave him change of clothing, while the women dried his wet garments by the hearth fire. The aged stranger thanked them with all humility and gentleness, but would by no means accept of the Knight's splendid mantle, which he offered him: he chose himself an old gray wrapper of the Fisherman's instead. So they returned to the kitchen; the dame gave up her own arm-chair to the Priest, and had no peace till he sat himself down in it: "For," said she, "you are old and weary, and a priest besides." Undine pushed her little footstool, on which she generally sat by Huldbrand, toward the good man's feet, and altogether behaved to him quite properly and gracefully. Huldbrand

took notice of this, in a playful whisper; but she answered very gravely: "Because he is a servant of the Maker of us all; that is too serious for a jest."

Meantime the two men set meat and wine before their guest, and when he had recruited his strength a little, he began his story; saying that the day before he had left his monastery, which was a good way off beyond the lake, intending to visit the bishop at his palace, and report to him the distress which these almost supernatural floods had caused the monks and their poor tenantry. After going round a long way, to avoid these very floods, he had been obliged toward evening to cross an arm of the overflowing lake, with the help of two honest sailors. "But," added he, "no sooner had our little vessel touched the waves, than we were wrapped in the tremendous storm, which is still raging over our heads now. It looked as if the waters had only awaited our coming to give a loose to their fury. The oars were soon dashed from the seamen's hands, and we saw their broken fragments carried further and further from us by the waves. We floated on the wave tops, helpless, driven by the furious tempest toward your shores, which we saw in the distance whenever the clouds parted for a moment. The boat was tossed about still more wildly and giddily; and whether it upset, or I fell out, I cannot tell. I floated on, with the dark prospect of instant death before me, till a wave landed me at the foot of a tree, in this your island."

"Ay, island indeed!" said the Fisherman. "It was a promontory but a short time ago. But, since the stream and our lake are gone raving mad together, every thing about us is new and strange."

The Priest continued: "As I crept along the water-side in the dark, with a wild uproar around me, something caught my eye, and presently I descried a beaten pathway, which was soon lost in the shades; I spied the light in your cottage, and ventured to come hither; and I cannot sufficiently thank my heavenly Father, who has not only delivered me from the waters, but guided me to such kind souls. I feel this blessing the more, as it is very likely I may never see any faces but yours again." — "How so?" asked the Fisherman. "Can you guess how long this fury of the elements may last?" replied the Priest. "And I am an old man. My stream of life may perhaps lose itself in the earth, before these floods subside. And besides, it may be the foaming waters will divide you from the forest more and more, till you are unable to get across in your fishing boat; and the people of the main-land, full of their own concerns, would quite forget you in your retreat."

Shuddering, and crossing herself, the Fisherman's wife exclaimed, "God forbid!" But the old man smiled at her, and said, "What creatures we are! That would make no difference, to you at least, my dear wife. How many years is it since you have set foot within the forest? And have you seen any

face but Undine's and mine? Lately, indeed, we have had the good Knight and Priest besides. But they would stay with us; so that if we are forgotten in this island, you will be the gainer."

"So I see," said the dame; "yet somehow, it is cheerless to feel ourselves quite cut off from the rest of the world, however seldom we had seen it before."

"Then *you* will stay with us!" murmured Undine in a sweet voice, and she pressed closer to Huldbrand's side. But he was lost in deep thought. Since the Priest had last spoken, the land beyond the wild stream had seemed to his fancy more dark and distant than ever; while the flowery island he lived in — and his bride, the fairest flower in the picture — bloomed and smiled more and more freshly in his imagination. Here was the Priest at hand to unite them; — and, to complete his resolution, the old dame just then darted a reproving look at Undine, for clinging to her lover's side in the holy man's presence; an angry lecture seemed on the point of beginning. He turned toward the Priest, and these words burst from him: "You see before you a betrothed pair, reverend sir; if this damsel and the kind old people will consent, you shall unite us this very evening."

The old folks were much surprised. Such a thought had often crossed their minds, but they had never till this moment heard it uttered; and it now fell upon their ears like an unexpected thing. Undine had suddenly become quite grave, and sat mus-

ing deeply, while the Priest inquired into various circumstances, and asked the old couple's consent to the deed. After some deliberation, they gave it; the dame went away to prepare the young people's bridal chamber, and to fetch from her stores two consecrated tapers for the wedding ceremony. Meanwhile the Knight was pulling two rings off his gold chain for himself and his bride to exchange. But this roused Undine from her reverie, and she said: "Stay! my parents did not send me into the world quite penniless; they looked forward long ago to this occasion, and provided for it." She quickly withdrew, and returned bringing two costly rings, one of which she gave to her betrothed and kept the other herself. This astonished the old Fisherman, and still more his wife, who came in soon after; for they neither of them had ever seen these jewels about the child. "My parents," said Undine, "had these rings sewed into the gay dress which I wore, when first I came to you. They charged me to let no one know of them till my wedding-day came. Therefore I took them secretly out of the dress, and have kept them hidden till this evening."

Here the Priest put a stop to the conversation, by lighting the holy tapers, placing them on the table, and calling the young pair to him. With few and solemn words he joined their hands; the aged couple gave their blessing, while the bride leaned upon her husband, pensive and trembling.

When it was over, the Priest said: "You are

strange people after all! What did you mean by saying you were the only inhabitants of this island? During the whole ceremony there was a fine-looking tall man, in a white cloak, standing just outside the window opposite me. He must be near the door still, if you like to invite him in." — "Heaven forbid!" said the dame, shuddering; the old man shook his head without speaking; and Huldbrand rushed to the window. He could fancy he saw a streak of white, but it was soon lost in darkness. So he assured the Priest he must have been mistaken; and they all sat down comfortably round the fire.

CHAPTER VII.

HOW THE REST OF THE EVENING PASSED AWAY.

UNDINE had been perfectly quiet and well-behaved both before and during the marriage ceremony; but now her wild spirits seemed the more uncontrollable from the restraint they had undergone, and rose to an extravagant height. She played all manner of childish tricks on her husband, her foster parents, and even the venerable Priest, and when the old woman began to check her, one or two words from Huldbrand, who gravely called Undine "his wife," reduced her to silence. The Knight himself, however, was far from being pleased at Undine's childishness; but no hint or sign would stop her. Whenever she perceived his disapproving looks — which she occasionally did — it subdued her for the moment; she would sit down by him, whisper something playfully in his ear, and so dispel the frown as it gathered on his brow. But the next instant some wild nonsense would dart into her head, and set her off worse than ever. At last the Priest said to her, in a kind but grave manner, "My dear young lady, no one that beholds you can be severe upon you, it is true; but remember, it is your duty to

keep watch over your soul, that it may be ever in harmony with that of your wedded husband." "Soul!" cried Undine, laughing; "that sounds very fine, and for most people may be very edifying and moral advice. But if one has no soul at all, pray how is one to keep watch over it? And that is my case." The Priest was deeply hurt, and turned away his face in mingled sorrow and anger. But she came up to him beseechingly, and said, "Nay, hear me before you are angry, for it grieves me to see you displeased, and you would not distress any creature who has done you no harm. Only have patience with me, and I will tell you all, from the beginning."

They saw she was preparing to give them a regular history; but she stopped short, appearing thrilled by some secret recollection, and burst into a flood of gentle tears. They were quite at a loss what to think of her, and gazed upon her, distressed from various causes. At length drying her eyes, she looked at the Priest earnestly and said, "There must be much to love in a soul, but much that is awful too. For God's sake, holy father, tell me — were it not better to be still without one?" She waited breathlessly for an answer, restraining her tears. Her hearers had all risen from their seats, and now stepped back from her, shuddering. She seemed to have no eyes but for the saintly man; her countenance assumed an expression of anxiety and awe which yet more alarmed the others. "Heavy must be the burden of a soul," added she, as no one an-

swered her, — "heavy indeed! for the mere approach of mine overshadows me with anxious melancholy. And ah! how light-hearted, how joyous I used to be!" A fresh burst of weeping overcame her, and she covered her face with her veil.

The Priest then approached her with much gravity, and adjured her by the holiest names to confess the truth, if any evil lurked in her, unknown to them. But she fell on her knees before him, repeated after him all his words of piety, gave praise to God, and declared she was in charity with all the world. The Priest turned to the young Knight. "Sir bridegroom," said he, "I leave you alone with her whom I have made your wife. As far as I can discover, there is no evil, although much that is mysterious, in her. I exhort you to be sober, loving, and faithful." So he went out; and the old people followed, crossing themselves.

Undine was still on her knees; she uncovered her face and looked timidly at Huldbrand, saying, "Ah, thou wilt surely cast me off now; and yet I have done nothing wrong, poor, poor child that I am!" This she said with so touching and gentle an expression, that her husband forgot all the gloom and mystery that had chilled his heart; he hastened toward her, and raised her in his arms. She smiled through her tears — it was like the glow of dawn shining upon a clear fountain. "Thou canst not forsake me!" whispered she, in accents of the firmest reliance; and she stroked his cheeks with her soft

little hands. He tried to shake off the gloomy thoughts which still lurked in a corner of his mind, suggesting to him that he had married a fairy, or some shadowy being from the world of spirits: one question, however, he could not help asking: "My dear little Undine, just tell me one thing: what was that you said about spirits of earth, and Kühleborn, when the Priest knocked at the door?" — All nonsense!" said Undine, laughing, with her usual gayety. "First I frightened you with it, and then you frightened me. And that is the end of the story, and of our wedding-day!" — "No, it is not over," said her now delighted lover; he extinguished the tapers, and by the light of the moon, which beamed brightly through the casement, he carried his beautiful wife into the bridal chamber.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DAY AFTER THE MARRIAGE.

A BRIGHT morning light wakened the young people; and Huldbrand lay musing silently. As often as he had dropped asleep, he had been scared by horrible dreams of spectres, who suddenly took the form of fair women, or of fair women who were transformed into dragons. And when he started up from these grim visions, and saw the pale, cold moonlight streaming in at the window, he would turn an anxious look toward Undine; she lay slumbering in undisturbed beauty and peace. Then he would compose himself to sleep again — soon again to wake in terror. When he looked back upon all this in broad daylight, he was angry with himself for having let a suspicion, a shade of distrust of his beautiful wife, enter his mind. He frankly confessed to her this injustice; she answered him only by pressing his hand, and sighing from the bottom of her heart. But a look, such as her eyes had never before given, of the deepest and most confiding tenderness, left him no doubt that she forgave him. So he arose cheerfully, and joined the family in the sitting-room. The three others were gathered round the hearth,

looking uneasy, and neither of them having ventured to speak his thoughts yet. The Priest seemed to be secretly praying for deliverance from evil. But when the young husband appeared, beaming with happiness, the care-worn faces brightened up; nay, the Fisherman ventured upon a few courteous jokes with the Knight, which won a smile even from the good housewife. Meanwhile Undine had dressed herself, and now came in; they could not help rising to meet her, and stood still, astonished; the young creature was the same, yet so different. The Priest was the first to address her, with an air of paternal kindness, and when he raised his hands in benediction, the fair woman sank on her knees, trembling with pious awe. In a few meek and humble words, she begged him to forgive the folly of the day before, and besought him, with great emotion, to pray for the salvation of her soul. Then rising, she kissed her foster parents, and thanking them for all their kindness, she said: "Oh, now I feel from the bottom of my heart how much you have done for me, how deeply grateful I ought to be, dear, dear people!" She seemed as if she could not caress them enough; but soon, observing the dame glance toward the breakfast, she went toward the hearth, busied herself arranging and preparing the meal, and would not suffer the good woman to take the least trouble herself.

So she went on all day; at once a young matron, and a bashful, tender, delicate bride. The three who knew her best were every moment expecting

this mood to change, and give place to one of her crazy fits; but they watched her in vain. There was still the same angelic mildness and sweetness. The Priest could not keep his eyes away from her; and he said more than once to the bridegroom, "Sir, it was a great treasure which Heaven bestowed upon you yesterday, by my poor ministration; cherish her worthily, and she will be to you a blessing in time and eternity."

Toward evening, Undine clasped the Knight's arm with modest tenderness, and gently led him out before the door, where the rays of the setting sun were lighting up the fresh grass, and the tall, taper stems of trees. The young wife's face wore a melting expression of love and sadness, and her lips quivered with some anxious, momentous secret, which as yet betrayed itself only by scarce audible sighs. She silently led her companion onward; if he spoke, she replied by a look which gave him no direct answer, but revealed a whole heaven of love and timid submission. So they reached the banks of the stream which had overflowed, and the Knight started on finding the wild torrent changed into a gentle rippling brook, without a trace of its former violence left. "By to-morrow it will have dried up completely," said the bride, in a faltering voice, "and thou mayest begone whither thou wilt." — "Not without thee, my Undine," said the Knight, playfully; "consider, if I had a mind to forsake thee, the Church, the Emperor, and his ministers

might step in, and bring thy truant home." — "No, no, you are free; it shall be as you please!" murmured Undine, half tears, half smiles. "But I think thou wilt not cast me away; is not my heart bound up in thine? Carry me over to that little island opposite. There I will know my fate. I could indeed easily step through the little waves; but I love to rest in thine arms! and thou *mayest* cast me off; this may be the last time." Huldbrand, full of anxious emotion, knew not how to answer. He took her up in his arms, and carried her over, now recollecting that from this very island he had borne her home to the Fisherman, on the night of his arrival. When there, he placed his fair burden on the turf, and was going to sit down by her; but she said, "No, sit there, opposite me — I will read my doom in your eyes, before your lips have spoken it. Now listen, and I will tell you all." And she began: —

"You must know, my own love, that in each element exists a race of beings, whose form scarcely differs from yours, but who very seldom appear to mortal sight. In the flames, the wondrous Salamanders glitter and disport themselves; in the depths of earth dwell the dry, spiteful race of Gnomes; the forests are peopled by Wood-nymphs, who are also spirits of air; and the seas, the rivers, and brooks contain the numberless tribes of Water-sprites. Their echoing halls of crystal, where the light of heaven pours in, with its sun and stars, are

glorious to dwell in; the gardens contain beautiful coral plants, with blue and red fruits; they wander over bright sea-sands, and gay-colored shells, among the hidden treasures of the old world, too precious to be bestowed on these latter days, and long since covered by the silver mantle of the deep: many a noble monument still gleams there below, bedewed by the tears of Ocean, who garlands it with flowery sea-weeds and wreaths of shells. Those that dwell there below, are noble and lovely to behold, far more so than mankind. Many a fisherman has had a passing glimpse of some fair water-nymph, rising out of the sea with her song; he would then spread the report of her apparition, and these wonderful beings came to be called *Undines*. And you now see before you, my love, an Undine."

The Knight tried to persuade himself that his fair wife was in one of her wild moods, and had invented this strange tale in sport. But though he said this to himself, he could not for a moment believe it; a mysterious feeling thrilled him; and, unable to utter a word, he kept his eyes riveted on the beautiful speaker. She shook her head sadly, heaved a deep sigh, and went on: —

"We might be happier than our human fellow-creatures, (for we call you fellow-creatures, as our forms are alike,) but for one great evil. We, and the other children of the elements, go down to the dust, body and spirit; not a trace of us remains; and when the time comes for you to rise again to a

glorified existence, we shall have perished with our native sands, flames, winds, and waves. For we have no souls; the elements move us, obey us while we live, close over us when we die; and we light spirits live as free from care as the nightingale, the gold-fish, and all such bright children of Nature. But no creatures rest content in their appointed place. My father, who is a mighty prince in the Mediterranean Sea, determined that his only child should be endowed with a soul, even at the cost of much suffering, which is ever the lot of souls. But a soul can be infused into one of our race, only by being united in the closest bands of love to one of yours. And now I have obtained a soul; to thee I owe it, O best beloved! and for that gift I shall ever bless thee, unless thou dost devote my whole futurity to misery. For what is to become of me should thou recoil from me, and cast me off? Yet I would not detain thee by deceit. And if I am to leave thee, say so now; go back to the land alone. I will plunge into this brook; it is my uncle, who leads a wonderful, sequestered life in this forest, away from all his friends. But he is powerful, and allied to many great rivers; and as he brought me here to the Fisherman, a gay and laughing child, so he is ready to take me back to my parents, a loving, suffering, forsaken woman."

She would have gone on; but Huldbrand, full of compassion and love, caught her in his arms, and carried her back. There, with tears and kisses, he

swore never to forsake his beloved wife ; and said he felt more blessed than the Greek statuary Pygmalion, whose beautiful statue dame Venus transformed into a living woman. Hanging on his arm in peaceful reliance, Undine returned ; and she felt from her inmost heart, how little cause she had to regret the crystal palaces of her father.

CHAPTER IX.

HOW THE KNIGHT AND HIS YOUNG BRIDE DEPARTED.

When Huldbrand awoke from sleep the next morning, he missed his fair companion; and again he was tormented with a doubt, whether his marriage, and the lovely Undine, might not be all a fairy dream. But she soon reappeared, came up to him, and said, "I have been out early, to see if my uncle had kept his word. He has recalled all the straying waters into his quiet bed, and now takes his lonely and pensive course through the forest as he used to do. His friends in the lake and the air are gone to rest also; all things have returned to their usual calmness; and you may set out homeward on dry land, as soon as you please." Huldbrand felt as if dreaming still, so little could he understand his wife's wonderful relations. But he took no notice of this, and his sweet Undine's gentle attentions soon charmed every uneasy thought away.

A little while after, as they stood at the door together, looking over the fair scene with its boundary of clear waters, his heart yearned so toward this cradle of his love that he said, — "But why

should we go away so soon? we shall never spend happier days in yonder world, than we have passed in this peaceful nook. Let us at least see two or three more suns go down here." — "As my Lord wishes," answered Undine, with cheerful submission; "but, you see, the old people will be grieved at parting with me, whenever it is; and if we give them time to become acquainted with my soul, and with its new powers of loving and honoring them, I fear that when I go, their aged hearts will break under the load of sorrow. As yet, they take my gentle mood for a passing whim, such as they saw me liable to formerly, like a calm on the lake when the winds are lulled; and they will soon begin to love some favorite tree or flower in my place. They must not learn to know this newly obtained, affectionate heart, in the first overflowings of its tenderness, just at the moment when they are to lose me for this world; and how could I disguise it from them, if we remained together longer?"

Huldbrand agreed with her; he went to the old couple, and finding them ready to consent, he resolved upon setting out that very hour. The Priest offered to accompany them; after a hasty farewell, the pretty bride was placed on the horse by her husband, and they crossed the stream's dry bed quickly, and entered the forest. Undine shed silent but bitter tears, while the old folks wailed after her aloud. It seemed as if some foreboding were crossing their minds, of how great their loss would prove.

The three travellers reached the deepest shades of the forest, without breaking silence. It was a fair sight to behold, as they passed through the leafy bowers: the graceful woman sitting on her noble steed, guarded on one side by the venerable Priest in the white habit of his order; on the other, by the youthful Knight, with his gorgeous attire and glittering sword. Huldbrand had no eyes but for his precious wife; Undine, who had dried her duteous tears, no thought but for him; and they soon fell into a noiseless interchange of glances and signs, which at length was interrupted by the sound of a low murmur, proceeding from the Priest and a fourth fellow-traveller, who had joined them unobserved. He wore a white robe, very like the Priest's dress, except that the hood almost covered his face, and the rest of it floated round him in such large folds that he was perpetually obliged to gather it up, throw it over his arm, or otherwise arrange it; yet it did not seem to impede him at all in walking; when the young people saw him he was saying, "And so, my worthy father, I have dwelt in the forest for many a year, yet I am not what you commonly call a hermit. For, as I told you, I know nothing of penance, nor do I think it would do me much good. What makes me so fond of the woods is, that I have a very particular fancy for winding through the dark shades and forest walks, with my loose white clothes floating about me; now and then a pretty sunbeam will glance over me as I go."—"You

seem to be a very curious person," replied the Priest, "and I should like to know more about you." — "And pray who are you, to carry on the acquaintance?" said the stranger. "They call me Father Heilmann," answered the Priest, "and I belong to St. Mary's monastery, beyond the lake." — "Ay, ay!" rejoined the other. "My name is Kühleborn, and if I stood upon ceremony, I might well call myself Lord of Kühleborn, or Baron (Freiherr) Kühleborn; for free I am, as the bird of the air, or a trifle more free. For instance, I must now have a word with the young woman there." And before they could look round, he was on the other side of the Priest, close to Undine, and stretching up his tall figure to whisper in her ear. But she turned hastily away, saying, "I have nothing more to do with you now." — "Heyday!" said the stranger, laughing, "what a prodigiously grand marriage yours must be, if you are to cast off your relations in this way! Have you forgotten Uncle Kühleborn, who brought you all the way here on his back so kindly?"

"But I entreat you," said Undine, "never come to me again. I am afraid of you now; and will not my husband become afraid of me, if he finds I have so strange a family?" — "My little niece," said Kühleborn, "please to remember that I am protecting you all this time; the foul Spirits of Earth might play you troublesome tricks if I did not. So you had better let me go on with you, and no more words. The old Priest there has a better memory

than yours, for he would have it he knew my face very well, and that I must have been with him in the boat, when he fell into the water. And he may well say so, seeing that the wave which washed him over was none but myself, and I landed him safe on the shore, in time for your wedding."

Undine and the Knight looked at Father Heilmann, but he seemed to be plodding on in a waking dream, and not listening to what was said. Undine said to Kühleborn, "There, I can see the end of the wood; we want your help no longer, and there is nothing to disturb us but you. So, in love and kindness I entreat you, begone, and let us go in peace." This seemed to make Kühleborn angry; he twisted his face hideously, and hissed at Undine, who cried aloud for help. Like lightning the Knight passed round her horse, and aimed a blow at Kühleborn's head with his sword. But instead of the head, he struck into a water-fall, which gushed foaming down a high cliff near them, and now showered them all with a splash that sounded like laughter, and wetted them to the bone. The Priest, seeming to wake up, said, "Well, I was expecting this, because that brook gushed down the rock so close to us. At first I could not shake off the idea that it was a man, and was speaking to me." The water-fall whispered distinctly in Huldbrand's ear, "Rash youth, dashing youth, I chide thee not, I shame thee not; still shield thy precious wife safe and sure, rash young soldier, dashing Knight!"

A little further on they emerged into the open plains. The city lay glittering before them, and the evening sun that gilded her towers, lent its grateful warmth to dry their soaked garments.

CHAPTER X.

OF THEIR WAY OF LIFE IN THE TOWN.

THE sudden disappearance of the young Knight Huldbrand of Ringstetten had made a great stir in the city, and distressed the inhabitants, with whom his gallantry in the lists and the dance, and his gentle, courteous manners, had made him very popular. His retainers would not leave the place without their master, but yet none had the courage to seek him in the haunted forest. They therefore remained in their hostelry, idly hoping, as men are so apt to do, and keeping alive the remembrance of their lost lord by lamentations. But soon after, when the tempest raged and the rivers overflowed, few doubted that the handsome stranger must have perished. Bertalda, among others, mourned him for lost, and was ready to curse herself, for having urged him to the fatal ride through the forest. Her ducal foster parents had arrived to take her away, but she prevailed upon them to wait a little, in hope that a true report of Huldbrand's death or safety might reach them. She tried to persuade some one of the young knights who contended for her favor, to venture into the forest and seek for the noble adventurer. But she would

not offer her hand as the reward, because she still hoped to bestow it some day on the wanderer himself; and to obtain a glove, a scarf, or some such token from her, none of them cared to expose his life to bring back so dangerous a rival.

Now, when Huldbrand unexpectedly reappeared, it spread joy among his servants, and all the people generally, except Bertalda; for while the others were pleased at his bringing with him such a beautiful wife, and Father Heilmann to bear witness to their marriage, it could not but grieve *her:* first, because the young Knight had really won her heart; and next, because she had betrayed her feelings by so openly lamenting his absence, far more than was now becoming. However, she behaved like a prudent woman, and suited her conduct to the circumstances, by living in the most cordial intimacy with Undine, — who passed in the town for a princess, released by Huldbrand from the power of some wicked enchanter of the forest. If she or her husband were questioned about it, they gave evasive answers; Father Heilmann's lips were sealed on all such idle topics, besides which, he had left them soon after they arrived, and returned to his cloister: so the citizens were left to their own wondering conjectures, and even Bertalda came no nearer the truth than others.

Meanwhile, Undine grew daily more fond of this winning damsel. "We must have known each other before," she would often say, "or else some

secret attraction draws us toward each other; for without some cause, some strange, mysterious cause, I am sure nobody would love another as I have loved you from the moment we met." Bertalda, on her part, could not deny that she felt strongly inclined to like Undine, notwithstanding the grounds of complaint she thought she had against this happy rival. The affection being mutual, the one persuaded her parents, the other her wedded lord, to defer the day of departure repeatedly; they even went so far as to propose that Bertalda should accompany Undine to the castle of Ringstetten, near the source of the Danube.

They were talking of this one fine evening, as they sauntered by starlight round the market-place, which was surrounded by high trees; the young couple had invited Bertalda to join their evening stroll, and they now paced backward and forward in pleasant talk, with the dark blue sky over their heads, and a beautiful fountain before them in the centre, which, as it bubbled and sprang up into fanciful shapes, often caught their attention, and interrupted the conversation. All around them was serene and pleasant; through the foliage gleamed the light of many a lamp from the surrounding houses; and the ear was soothed by the hum of children at play, and of sauntering groups like themselves; they enjoyed at once the pleasure of solitude, and the social happiness of being near the cheerful haunts of men. Every little difficulty that had occurred to their fa-

vorite plan, seemed to vanish upon nearer examination, and the three friends could not imagine that Bertalda's consent to the journey need be delayed a moment. But as she was on the point of naming a day for joining them and setting out, a very tall man came forward from the middle of the place, bowed to them respectfully, and began whispering in Undine's ear. She, though apparently displeased with the interruption and with the speaker, stepped aside with him, and they began a low discourse together, in what sounded like a foreign language. Huldbrand thought he knew this strange man's face, and fixed his attention upon him so earnestly, that he neither heard nor answered the astonished Bertalda's questions. All at once Undine clapped her hands joyfully, and turned her back, laughing, upon the stranger; he shook his head and walked off in an angry, hurried manner, and stepped into the fountain. This confirmed Huldbrand in his guess; while Bertalda inquired, "My dear Undine, what business had that man of the fountain with you?" Her friend smiled archly and replied, "On your birthday, the day after to-morrow, I will tell you, my sweet girl;" and she would say no more. She only pressed Bertalda to come and dine with them on that day, and bring her foster parents; after which they separated.

"Kühleborn?" said Huldbrand to his wife with a suppressed shudder, as they walked home through the dark streets. "Yes, it was he, replied Undine,

"and he tried to put all sorts of nonsense into my head. However, without intending it he delighted me by one piece of news. If you wish to hear it, now, my kind lord, you have but to say so, and I will tell you every word. But if you like to give your Undine a *very* great delight, you will wait two days, and then have your share in the surprise."

The Knight readily granted her what she had asked so meekly and gracefully; and as she dropped asleep she murmured, "How it will delight her! how little she expects such a message from the mysterious man — dear, dear Bertalda!"

CHAPTER XI.

BERTALDA'S BIRTHDAY.

THE guests were now assembled at table; Bertalda sat at the top, adorned with flowers like the goddess of spring, and flashing with jewels, the gifts of many friends and relations. Undine and Huldbrand were on either side of her. When the sumptuous meal was ended, and the dessert served, the doors were opened — according to the good old German custom — to let the common people look in and have their share in the gayety of the rich. The attendants offered wine and cake to the assembled crowd. Huldbrand and Bertalda were eagerly watching for the promised disclosure, and both kept their eyes fixed upon Undine. But she was still silent; her cheeks dimpled occasionally with a bright, conscious smile. Those that knew what she was about to do, could perceive that her interesting secret was ready to burst from her lips, but that she was playfully determined to keep it in, as children sometimes will save their daintiest morsels for the last. Her silent glee communicated itself to the other two, who watched impatiently for the happy news that was about to gladden their hearts. Some of the

company now asked Undine for a song. She seemed to be prepared with one, and sent for her lute, to which she sang as follows : —

The sun gilds the wave,
  The flowers are sweet,
And the ocean doth lave
  The grass at our feet!

What lies on the earth
  So blooming and gay?
Doth a blossom peep forth
  And greet the new day?

Ah, 't is a fair child!
  She sports with the flowers,
So gladsome and mild,
  Through the warm sunny hours.

O sweet one, who brought thee?
  From far distant shore
Old Ocean he caught thee,
  And many a league bore.

Poor babe, all in vain
  Thou dost put forth thy hand;
None clasp it again,
  'T is a bleak foreign land:

The flowers bloom brightly,
  And soft breathes the air,
But all pass thee lightly:
  Thy mother is far!

Thy life scarce begun,
  Thy smiles fresh from heaven,
Thy best treasure is gone,
  To another ' t is given!

A gallant charger treads the dell,
His noble rider pities thee;
He takes thee home, he tends thee well,
And cares for thee right gen'rously.

Well thou becom'st thy station high,
And bloom'st the fairest in the land;
And yet, alas! the purest joy
Is left on thine own distant strand.

Undine put down her lute with a melancholy smile; and the eyes of the Duke and Duchess filled with tears: "So it was when I found you, my poor innocent orphan!" said the Duke with great emotion; "as the fair singer said, your best treasure was gone, and we have been unable to supply its place."

"Now let us think of the poor parents," said Undine; and she struck the chords and sang: —

I.

Mother roves from room to room
Seeking rest, she knows not how;
The house is silent as the tomb,
And who is there to bless her now?

II.

Silent house! Oh words of sorrow!
Where is now her darling child?
She who should have cheered the morrow,
And the evening hours beguiled?

III.

The buds are swelling on the tree,
The sun returns when night is o'er;
But, mother, ne'er comes joy to thee,
Thy child shall bless thine eyes no more!

IV.

And when the evening breezes blow,
And father seeks his own fireside,
He smiles, forgetful of his woe,
But ah ! his tears that smile shall hide.

V.

Father knows that in his home
Deathlike stillness dwells for aye ;
The voice of mirth no more shall come,
And mother sighs the livelong day.

"O Undine, for God's sake, where are my parents?" cried Bertalda, weeping. "Surely you know, you have discovered it, most wonderful woman ; else how could you have stirred my inmost heart as you have done? They are perhaps even now in the room — can it be?" — and her eyes glanced over the gay assembly, and fixed upon a reigning Princess who sat next to the Duke. But Undine bent forward to the door, her eyes overflowing with the happiest tears. "Where are they, the poor anxious parents?" said she ; and the old Fisherman and his wife came out from the crowd of by-standers. They turned an inquiring eye upon Undine, and then upon the handsome lady whom they were to call daughter. "There she is," faltered the delighted Undine, and the aged couple caught their long-lost child in their arms, thanking God, and weeping aloud.

Affrighted and enraged, Bertalda shrank from their embrace. It was more than her proud spirit could bear, to be thus degraded ; at a moment, too,

when she was fully expecting an increase of splendor, and fancy was showering pearls and diadems upon her head. She suspected that her rival had contrived this, on purpose to mortify her before Huldbrand and all the world. She reviled both Undine and the old people; the hateful words, "Treacherous creature! and bribed wretches!" burst from her lips. The old woman said in a half whisper, "Dear me, she has grown up a wicked woman; and yet my heart tells me she is my own child." The Fisherman had clasped his hands, and was praying silently that this girl might not prove to be theirs indeed. Undine, pale as death, looked from Bertalda to the parents, from the parents to Bertalda, and could not recover the rude shock she had sustained, at being plunged from all her happy dreams into a state of fear and misery, such as she had never known before.

"Have you a soul? Have you indeed a soul, Bertalda?" she exclaimed once or twice, trying to recall her angry friend to reason, from what she took for a fit of madness, or a kind of nightmare. But Bertalda only stormed the louder; the repulsed parents wailed piteously, and the company began to dispute angrily and to side with one or the other; when Undine stepped forward, and asked with so much earnest gentleness to be listened to in her husband's house, that all was hushed in a moment. She took the place which Bertalda had left, at the head of the table, and as she stood there in modest dignity, the

eyes of all turned toward her, and she said: "You all that cast such angry looks at each other, and so cruelly spoil the joy of my poor feast, alas! I little knew what your foolish angry passions were, and I think I never shall understand you. What I had hoped would do so much good has led to all this; but that is not my fault, it is your own doing, believe me; I have little more to say, but one thing you must hear: I have told no falsehood. Proofs I have none to give, beyond my word, but I will swear to the truth of it. I heard it from him who decoyed Bertalda from her parents into the water, and then laid her down in the meadow where the Duke was to pass."

"She is a sorceress," cried Bertalda, "a witch who has dealings with evil spirits! she has acknowledged it."

"I have not," said Undine, with a heaven of innocence and guilelessness in her eyes. "Nor am I a witch — only look at me!"

"Then she lies," cried Bertalda, "and she dares not assert that I was born of these mean people. My noble parents, I beseech you take me out of this room, and this town, where they are leagued together to insult me."

But the venerable Duke stood still, and his lady said, "We must first sift this matter to the bottom. Nothing shall make me leave the room till my doubts are satisfied."

Then the old woman came up, made a deep obei-

sance to the Duchess, and said, "You give me courage to speak, my noble, worthy lady. I must tell you, that if this ungodly young woman is my daughter, I shall know her by a violet mark between her shoulders, and another on the left instep. If she would but come with me into another room" —

"I will not uncover myself before that country-woman," said Bertalda, proudly turning away.

"But before me, you will," rejoined the Duchess gravely. "You shall go with me into that room, young woman, and the good dame will accompany us." They withdrew together, leaving the party in silent suspense. In a few minutes they came back; Bertalda was deadly pale, and the Duchess said, "Truth is truth, and I am bound to declare that our Lady Hostess has told us perfectly right. Bertalda is the Fisherman's daughter; more than that, it concerns nobody to know." And the princely pair departed, taking with them their adopted child, and followed (upon a sign from the Duke) by the Fisherman and his wife. The rest of the assembly broke up, in silence or with secret murmurs, and Undine sank into Huldbrand's arms, weeping bitterly.

CHAPTER XII.

HOW THEY LEFT THE IMPERIAL CITY.

THERE was certainly much to displease the Lord of Ringstetten in the events of this day; yet he could not look back upon them, without feeling proud of the guileless truth and the generosity of heart shown by his lovely wife. "If indeed her soul was my gift," thought he, "it is nevertheless much better than my own;" and he devoted himself to the task of soothing her grief, and determined he would take her away the next morning from a spot now so full of bitter recollections.

They were mistaken, however, in thinking that she had lost in the eyes of the world by this adventure. So prepared were the minds of the people to find something mysterious in her, that her strange discovery of Bertalda's origin scarcely surprised them; while, on the other hand, every one that heard of Bertalda's history and of her passionate behavior, was moved with indignation. Of this, the Knight and Undine were not aware; nor would it have given them any comfort, for she was still as jealous of Bertalda's good name as of her own.

Upon the whole, they had no greater wish than to leave the town without delay.

At daybreak next morning, Undine's chariot was in readiness at the door, and the steeds of Huldbrand and of his squires stood around it, pawing the ground with impatience. As the Knight led his fair bride to the door, a fishing girl accosted them. "We want no fish," said Huldbrand; "we are just going away." The girl began to sob bitterly, and they then recognized her as Bertalda. They immediately turned back into the house with her; and she said that the Duke and Duchess had been so incensed at her violence the day before, as to withdraw their protection from her, though not without giving her a handsome allowance. The Fisherman too had received a liberal gift, and had departed that evening with his wife, to return to the promontory. "I would have gone with them," she continued, "but the old Fisherman, whom they call my father" —

"And so he is, Bertalda," interrupted Undine. "He is your father. For the man you saw at the fountain told me how it is. He was trying to persuade me that I had better not take you to Ringstetten, and he let drop the secret."

"Well then," said Bertalda, "my father — if so it must be — my father said, 'You shall not live with us till you are an altered creature. Take courage, and come across the haunted forest to us; that will show that you sincerely wish to belong to your par-

ents. But do not come in your finery; be like what you are, a fisherman's daughter.' And I will do as he bids me; for the whole world has forsaken me, and I have nothing left, but to live and die humbly in a poor hut, alone with my lowly parents. I do dread the forest very much. They say it is full of grim spectres, and I am so timid! But what can I do? I came here only to implore the Lady of Ringstetten's pardon for my rude language yesterday. I have no doubt you meant what you did kindly, noble Dame; but you little knew what a trial your words would be to me, and I was so alarmed and bewildered, that many a hasty, wicked word escaped my lips. Ah forgive me, forgive me! I am unhappy enough already. Only consider what I was yesterday morning, even at the beginning of your feast, and what I am now."

Her words were lost in a flood of bitter tears, and Undine, equally affected, fell weeping on her neck. It was long before her emotion would let her speak: at length she said, "You shall go to Ringstetten with us; all shall be as we had settled it before; only call me Undine again, and not 'Lady' and 'noble Dame.' You see, we began by being exchanged in our cradles; our lives have been linked from that hour, and we will try to bind them so closely that no human power shall sever us. Come with us to Ringstetten, and all will be well. We will live like sisters there, trust me for arranging that." Bertalda looked timidly at Huldbrand. The sight of this beautiful, for-

saken maiden affected him; he gave her his hand, and encouraged her kindly to trust herself to him and his wife. "As to your parents," said he, "we will let them know why you do not appear;" and he would have said much more concerning the good old folks, but he observed that Bertalda shuddered at the mention of them, and therefore dropped the subject. He gave her his arm, placed first her and then Undine in the carriage, and rode cheerfully after them; he urged the drivers on so effectually, that they very soon found themselves out of sight of the city, and beyond the reach of sad recollections — and the two ladies could fully enjoy the beautiful country through which the road wound along.

After a few days' travelling, they arrived, one sunny evening, at the Castle of Ringstetten. Its young lord had much business with his steward and laborers to occupy him, so that Undine was left alone with Bertalda. They took a walk on the high ramparts of the castle, and admired the rich Swabian landscape, which lay far and wide around them. A tall man suddenly came up, with a courteous obeisance; and Bertalda could not help thinking him very like the ominous man of the fountain. The likeness struck her still more, when, upon an impatient and even menacing gesture of Undine's, he went away with the same hasty step and shake of the head as before.

"Do not be afraid, dear Bertalda," said Undine; "the ugly man shall not harm you this time." After

which she told her whole history, beginning from her birth, and how they had been exchanged in their earliest childhood. At first her friend looked at her with serious alarm; she thought that Undine was possessed by some delirium. But she became convinced it was all true, as she listened to the well-connected narrative, which accounted so well for the strange events of the last months; besides which, there is something in genuine truth which finds an answer in every heart, and can hardly be mistaken. She was bewildered, when she found herself one of the actors in a living fairy tale, and as wild a tale as any she had read. She gazed upon Undine with reverence; but could not help feeling a chill thrown over her affection for her; and that evening at supper time, she wondered at the Knight's fond love and familiarity toward a being, whom she now looked upon as rather a spirit than a human creature.

CHAPTER XIII.

HOW THEY LIVED IN THE CASTLE OF RINGSTETTEN.

As he who relates this tale is moved to the heart by it, and hopes that it may affect his readers too, he entreats of them one favor; namely, that they will bear with him while he passes rapidly over a long space of time; and be content if he barely touches upon what happened therein. He knows well that some would relate in great detail, step by step, how Huldbrand's heart began to be estranged from Undine, and drawn toward Bertalda; while she cared not to disguise from him her ardent love; and how between them the poor injured wife came to be rather feared than pitied, — and when he showed her kindness, a cold shiver would often creep over him, and send him back to the child of earth, Bertalda; — all this the author knows, might be dwelt upon; nay, perhaps it ought so to be. But his heart shrinks from such a task, for he has met with such passages in real life, and cannot even abide their shadows in his memory. Perhaps, gentle reader, such feelings are known to thee also, for they are the common lot of mortal man. Well is thee if thou hast felt, not inflicted, these pangs; in these

cases it is more blessed to receive than to give. As such recollections wake up from their cells, they will but cast a soft shade over the past; and it may be the thought of thy withered blossoms, once so fondly loved, brings a gentle tear down thy cheek. Enough of this: we will not go on to pierce our hearts with a thousand separate arrows, but content ourselves with saying, that so it happened in the present instance.

Poor Undine drooped day by day, and the others were neither of them happy; Bertalda especially was uneasy, and ready to suspect the injured wife, whenever she fancied herself slighted by Huldbrand; meantime she had gradually assumed the command in the house, and the deluded Huldbrand supported her openly. Undine looked on, in meek resignation. To increase the discomfort of their lives, there was no end to the mysterious sights and sounds that haunted Huldbrand and Bertalda in the vaulted galleries of the castle; such as had never been heard of before. The long white man, too well known to him as Uncle Kühleborn, and to her as the spirit of the fountain, often showed his threatening countenance to both; but chiefly to Bertalda, who had more than once been made ill by the fright, and thought seriously of leaving the castle. But her love for Huldbrand detained her, and she quieted her conscience by thinking, that it had never come to a declaration of love between them; and, besides, she would not have known which way to

turn. After receiving the Lord of Ringstetten's message, that Bertalda was with them, the old Fisherman had traced a few lines, scarcely legible, from infirmity and long disuse, saying, "I am now a poor old widower; for my dear good wife is dead. But, lonely as I am by my fireside, I had rather Bertalda stayed away than came here. Provided she does not harm my dear Undine! My curse be upon her if she does." Bertalda scattered these last words to the winds, but treasured up her father's command that she should not join him: as is the way with us selfish beings.

One day, when Huldbrand had just ridden out, Undine sent for her servants and desired them to fetch a large stone and carefully to stop up the mouth of the magnificent fountain, which played in the centre of the court. The men objected, that they must then always go down the valley to a great distance for water. Undine smiled mournfully. "It grieves me to add to your burdens, my good friends," said she, "I had rather go and fill my pitcher myself; but this fountain must be sealed up. Trust me, nothing else will do, and it is our only way of escaping a much worse evil."

The servants rejoiced at any opportunity of pleasing their gentle mistress; not a word more was said, and they lifted the huge stone. They had raised it, and were about to let it down on the mouth of the spring, when Bertalda ran up, calling out to them to stop: the water of this fountain was the

best for her complexion, and she never would consent to its being stopped. But Undine, instead of yielding as usual, kept firmly, though gently, to her resolution; she said that it behooved her, as mistress of the house, to order all such matters as appeared best to her, and none but her lord and husband should call her to account. "Look, oh look!" cried Bertalda, eagerly and angrily, "how the poor bright water curls and writhes, because you would deprive it of every gleam of sunshine, and of the cheerful faces of men, whose mirror it was created to be!" In truth, the spring did writhe and bubble up wonderfully, just as if some one were trying to force his way through; but Undine pressed them the more to dispatch the work. Nor was there much need to repeat her commands. The household people were too glad at once to obey their gentle lady, and to mortify the pride of Bertalda, in spite of whose threats and wrath, the stone was soon firmly fastened down on the mouth of the spring. Undine bent over it thoughtfully, and wrote on its surface with her delicate fingers. Something very hard and sharp must have been hidden in her hand; for when she walked away, and the others came up, they found all manner of strange characters on the stone, none of which were there before.

When the Knight came home that evening, Bertalda received him with tears and complaints of Undine. He looked sternly at his poor wife, who mournfully cast down her eyes, saying, however,

with firmness, "My lord and husband would not chide the meanest of his vassals, without giving him a hearing, much less his wedded wife." —"Speak, then; what was your reason for this strange proceeding?" said the Knight with a frown. "I would rather tell it you quite alone!" sighed Undine. "You can say it just as well in Bertalda's presence," replied he. "Yes, if thou requirest it," said Undine, "but require it not." She looked so humble, and so submissive in her touching beauty, that the Knight's heart was melted, as by a sunbeam from happier days. He took her affectionately by the hand, and led her to his own room, where she spoke to him as follows.

"You know that wicked Uncle Kühleborn, my dearest lord, and have often been provoked at meeting him about the castle. Bertalda, too, has been often terrified by him. No wonder; he is soulless, shallow, and unthinking as a mirror, in whom no feeling can pierce the surface. He has two or three times seen that you were displeased with me, that I in my childishness could not help weeping, and that Bertalda might chance to laugh at the same moment. And upon this he builds all manner of unjust suspicions, and interferes, unasked, in our concerns. What is the use of my reproaching him, or repulsing him with angry words? He believes nothing that I say. A poor cold life is his! How should he know, that the sorrows and the joys of love are so sweetly alike, so closely linked, that it is not in

human power to part them. When a tear gushes out, a smile lies beneath; and a smile will draw the tears from their secret cells."

She smiled through her tears in Huldbrand's face, and a warm ray of his former love shot through his heart. She perceived this, pressed closer to him, and with a few tears of joy she went on.

"As I found it impossible to get rid of our tormentor by words, I had nothing for it, but to shut the door against him. And his only access to us was that fountain. He has quarreled with the other fountain spirits in the surrounding valleys, and it is much lower down the Danube, below the junction of some of his friends with the great river, that his power begins again. Therefore I stopped the mouth of our fountain, and inscribed the stone with characters which cripple the might of my restless uncle; so that he can no longer cross your path, or mine, or Bertalda's. Men can indeed lift the stone off as easily as ever; the inscription has no power over them. So you are free to comply with Bertalda's wish; but indeed, she little knows what she asks. Against her the wild Kühleborn has a most particular spite, and if some of his forebodings were to come true, (as they might, without her intending any harm,) O, dearest, even thou wert not free from danger!"

Huldbrand deeply felt the generosity of his noble-minded wife, in so zealously shutting out her formidable protector, even when reviled by Bertalda

for so doing. He clasped her fondly in his arms, and said with much emotion, "The stone shall remain; and every thing shall be done as thou wishest, now and hereafter, my sweetest Undine."

Scarce could she trust these words of love, after so dreary an estrangement; she returned his caresses with joyful but timid gratitude, and at length said, "My own dear love, as you are so exceedingly kind to me to-day, may I ask you to promise one thing? Herein you are like the summer: is he not most glorious when he decks his brows with thunders, and frowns upon us from his throne of clouds? So it is when your eyes flash lightning; it becomes you well, although in my weakness I may often shed a tear at it. Only, — if you would promise to refrain from it when we are sailing, or even near any water. For there, you see, my relations have a right to control me. They might relentlessly tear me from you in their wrath, fancying that there is an insult offered to one of their race; and I should be doomed to spend the rest of my life in the crystal palaces below, without ever coming to you; or if they did send me up again, — oh Heaven, that would be far worse! No, no, my best beloved; you will not let it come to that, if you love your poor Undine."

He solemnly promised to do as she asked him, and they returned to the saloon, quite restored to comfort and peace. They met Bertalda, followed by a few laborers whom she had sent for, and she said in a tone of bitterness that had grown common with

her of late, "So, now your private consultation is over, and we may have the stone taken up. Make haste, you people, and do it for me." But Huldbrand, incensed at her arrogance, said shortly and decidedly, "The stone shall not be touched," and he then reproved Bertalda for her rudeness to his wife; upon which the laborers walked off, exulting secretly, while Bertalda hurried away to her chamber, pale and disturbed.

The hour of supper came, and they waited in vain for Bertalda. A message was sent to her; the servants found her room empty, and brought back only a sealed letter directed to the Knight. He opened it with trepidation and read, "I feel with shame that I am only a fisherman's daughter. Having forgotten it a moment, I will expiate my crime in the wretched hut of my parents. Live happy with your beautiful wife!"

Undine was sincerely grieved; she entreated Huldbrand to pursue their friend at once, and bring her back with him. Alas! there was little need of entreaty. His passion for Bertalda returned with fresh violence; he searched the castle all over, asking every one if they could tell him in what direction the fair one had fled. He could discover nothing; and now he had mounted his horse in the court, and stood ready to set forth, and try the route by which he had brought Bertalda to the castle. A peasant boy just then came up, saying that he had met the lady riding toward the Black Valley. Like

a shot the Knight darted through the gate, and took that direction, without heeding Undine's anxious cries from a window: "To the Black Valley? oh, not there! Huldbrand, not there! Or take me with you, for God's sake!" Finding it vain to cry, she had her white palfrey saddled in all haste, and galloped after her husband, without allowing any one to attend her.

CHAPTER XIV.

HOW BERTALDA DROVE HOME WITH THE KNIGHT.

The Black Valley lay among the deepest recesses of the mountains. What it is called now none can tell. In those times it bore that name among the countrymen, on account of the deep gloom shed over it by many high trees, mostly pines. Even the brook which gushed down between the cliffs was tinged with black, and never sparkled like the merry streams from which nothing intercepts the blue of heaven. Now, in the dusk of twilight, it looked darker still as it gurgled between the rocks. The Knight spurred his horse along its banks, now fearing to lose ground in his pursuit, and now again, that he might overlook the fugitive in her hiding-place, if he hurried past too swiftly. He presently found himself far advanced in the valley, and hoped he must soon overtake her, if he were but in the right track. Then again, the thought that it might be a wrong one roused the keenest anxiety in his breast. Where was the tender Bertalda to lay her head, if he missed her in this bleak stormy night, which was setting in, black and awful, upon the valley? And now he saw something white gleaming through the

boughs, on the slope of the mountain; he took it for Bertalda's robe and made for it. But the horse started back, and reared so obstinately that Huldbrand, impatient of delay, and having already found him difficult to manage among the brambles of the thicket, dismounted, and fastened the foaming steed to a tree; he then felt his way through the bushes on foot. The boughs splashed his head and cheeks roughly with cold wet dew; far off, he heard the growl of thunder beyond the mountains, and the whole strange scene had such an effect upon him, that he became afraid of approaching the white figure, which he now saw lying on the ground at a short distance. And yet he could distinguish it to be a woman, dressed in long white garments like Bertalda's, asleep or in a swoon. He came close to her, made the boughs rustle, and his sword ring, — but she stirred not. "Bertalda!" cried he; first gently, then louder and louder, — in vain. When at length he shouted the beloved name with the whole strength of his lungs, a faint mocking echo returned it from the cavities of the rocks — "Bertalda!" but the sleeper awoke not. He bent over her; but the gloom of the valley and the shades of night prevented his discerning her features. At length, though kept back by some boding fears, he knelt down by her on the earth, and just then a flash of lightning lighted up the valley. He saw a hideous distorted face close to his own, and heard a hollow voice say, "Give me a kiss, thou sweet shepherd!"

With a cry of horror Huldbrand started up, and the monster after him. "Go home!" it cried, "the bad spirits are abroad — go home! or I have you!" and its long white arm nearly grasped him. "Spiteful Kühleborn," cried the Knight, taking courage, "what matters it, I know thee, foul spirit! There is a kiss for thee!" And he raised his sword furiously against the figure. But it dissolved, and a drenching shower made it sufficiently clear to the Knight what enemy he had encountered. "He would scare me away from Bertalda," said he aloud to himself; "he thinks he can subdue me by his absurd tricks, and make me leave the poor terrified maiden in his power, that he may wreak his vengeance upon her. But *that* he never shall — wretched goblin! What power lies in a human breast when steeled by firm resolve, the contemptible juggler has yet to learn." And he felt the truth of his own words, and seemed to have nerved himself afresh by them. He thought, too, that fortune now began to aid him, for before he had got back to his horse again, he distinctly heard the piteous voice of Bertalda as if near at hand, borne toward him on the winds as their howling mingled with the thunder. Eagerly did he push on in that direction, and he found the trembling damsel, who was just attempting to climb the mountain's side, in order, at any risk, to get out of these awful shades.

He met her affectionately, and however proudly she might before have determined to hold out, she

could not but rejoice at being rescued by her much-loved Huldbrand from the fearful solitude, and warmly invited to return to his cheerful home in the castle. She accompanied him with scarcely a word of reluctance, but was so exhausted, that the Knight felt much relieved when they had reached the horse in safety; he hastened to loose him, and would have placed his tender charge upon him, and walked by her side to guide her carefully through the dangerous shades. But Kühleborn's mad pranks had driven the horse quite wild. Hardly could the Knight himself have sprung upon the terrified plunging creature's back: to place the trembling Bertalda upon him was quite impossible; so they made up their minds to walk home. With his horse's bridle over one arm, Huldbrand supported his half-fainting companion on the other. Bertalda mustered what strength she could, in order the sooner to get beyond this dreaded valley, but fatigue weighed her down like lead, and every limb shook under her; partly from the recollection of all she had already suffered from Kühleborn's spite, and partly from terror at the continued crashing of the tempest through the mountain forests.

At length she slid down from her protector's arm, and sinking on the moss, she said: "Leave me to die here, noble Huldbrand; I reap the punishment of my folly, and must sink under this load of fatigue and anguish." —"Never, my precious friend, never will I forsake you," cried Huldbrand, vainly striving

to curb his raging steed, who was now beginning to start and plunge worse than ever: the Knight contrived to keep him at some distance from the exhausted maiden, so as to save her the terror of seeing him near her. But no sooner had he withdrawn himself and the wild animal a few steps, than she began to call him back in the most piteous manner, thinking he was indeed going to desert her in this horrible wilderness. He was quite at a loss what to do: gladly would he have let the horse gallop away in the darkness and expend his wild fury, but that he feared he might rush down upon the very spot where Bertalda lay.

In this extremity of distress, it gave him unspeakable comfort to descry a wagon slowly descending the stony road behind him. He called out for help: a man's voice replied telling him to have patience, but promising to come to his aid; soon two white horses became visible through the thicket, and next the white smock-frock of the wagoner, and a large sheet of white linen that covered his goods inside. "Ho, stop!" cried the man, and the obedient horses stood still. "I see well enough," said he, "what ails the beast. When first I came through these parts my horses were just as troublesome; because there is a wicked water-sprite living hard by, who takes delight in making them play tricks. But I know a charm for this; if you will give me leave to whisper it in your horse's ear, you will see him as quiet as mine yonder in a moment." — "Try your charm, if

it will do any good!" said the impatient Knight. The driver pulled the unruly horse's head toward him, and whispered a couple of words in his ear. At once the animal stood still, tamed and pacified, and showed no remains of his former fury but by panting and snorting, as if he still chafed inwardly. This was no time for Huldbrand to inquire how it had been done. He agreed with the wagoner that Bertalda should be taken into the wagon, which by his account was loaded with bales of soft cotton, and conveyed to the Castle of Ringstetten, while the Knight followed on horseback. But his horse seemed too much spent by his former violence to be able to carry his master so far, and the man persuaded Huldbrand to get into the wagon with Bertalda. The horse was to be fastened behind. "We shall go down hill," said the man, "and that is light work for my horses." The Knight placed himself by Bertalda, his horse quietly followed them, and the driver walked by steadily and carefully.

In the deep stillness of night, while the storm growled more and more distant, and in the consciousness of safety and easy progress, Huldbrand and Bertalda insensibly got into confidential discourse. He tenderly reproached her for having so hastily fled; she excused herself with bashful emotion, and through all she said it appeared most clearly that her heart was all his own. Huldbrand was too much engrossed by the expression of her words to attend to their apparent meaning, and he

only replied to the former. Upon this, the wagoner cried out in a voice that rent the air, "Now my horses, up with you; show us what you are made of, my fine fellows!" The Knight put out his head and saw the horses treading or rather swimming through the foaming waters, while the wheels whirled loudly and rapidly like those of a water-mill, and the wagoner was standing upon the top of his wagon, overlooking the floods. "Why, what road is this? It will take us into the middle of the stream," cried Huldbrand. "No, sir," cried the driver laughing; "it is just the other way. The stream is come into the middle of the road. Look round, and see how it is all flooded."

In fact, the whole valley was now heaving with waves, that had swollen rapidly to a great height. "This must be Kühleborn, the wicked sprite, trying to drown us!" cried the Knight. "Have you no charm to keep him off, friend?" — "I do know of one," said the driver, "but I can't and won't make use of it, till you know who I am." — "Is this a time for riddles?" shouted the Knight; "the flood is rising every moment, and what care I to know who you are?" — "It rather concerns you, however, to know," said the driver, "for I am Kühleborn." And he grinned hideously into the wagon — which was now a wagon no longer, nor were the horses horses; but all dissolved into foaming waves; the wagoner himself shot up into a giant waterspout, bore down the struggling horse into the flood, and, towering over

the heads of the hapless pair, till he had swelled into a watery mountain, he would have swallowed them up the next moment.

But now the sweet voice of Undine was heard above the wild uproar; the moon shone out between the clouds, and at the same instant Undine came into sight, upon the high grounds above them. She addressed Kühleborn in a commanding tone, the huge wave laid itself down, muttering and murmuring; the waters rippled gently away in the moon's soft light, and Undine alighted like a white dove from her airy height, and led them to a soft green spot on the hill-side, where she refreshed their jaded spirits with choice food. She then helped Bertalda to mount her own white palfrey, and at length they all three reached the Castle of Ringstetten in safety.

CHAPTER XV.

THE TRIP TO VIENNA.

For some time after this adventure they led a quiet and peaceful life in the castle. The Knight was deeply touched by his wife's angelic goodness, so signally displayed by her pursuing and saving them in the Black Valley, where their lives were threatened by Kühleborn. Undine herself was happy in the peace of an approving conscience; besides that, many a gleam of hope now brightened her path, as her husband's love and confidence seemed to revive; Bertalda meanwhile was grateful, modest, and timid, without claiming any merit for being so. If either of her companions alluded to the sealing up of the fountain, or the adventures in the Black Valley, she would implore them to spare her on those subjects, because she could not think of the fountain without a blush, nor the valley without a shudder. She was therefore told nothing further; indeed, what would have been the use of enlightening her? Nothing could add to the peace and happiness which had taken up their abode in the Castle of Ringstetten; they enjoyed the present in full se-

curity, and the future lay before them, all blooming with fair fruits and flowers.

The winter had gone by without any interruption to their social comfort; and spring, with her young green shoots and bright blue skies, began to smile upon men; their hearts felt light, like the young season, and from its returning birds of passage, they caught a fancy to travel. One day, as they were walking together near the sources of the Danube, Huldbrand fell into talk about the glories of that noble river, how proudly he flowed on, through fruitful lands, to the spot where the majestic city of Vienna crowned his banks, and how every mile of his course was marked by fresh grandeur and beauty. "How delightful it would be to follow his course down to Vienna!" cried Bertalda; but instantly relapsing into her timid, chastened manner, she blushed and was silent. This touched Undine, and in her eagerness to give her friend pleasure, she said: "And why should we not take the trip?" Bertalda jumped for joy, and their fancy began to paint this pleasant recreation in the brightest colors. Huldbrand encouraged them cheerfully, but whispered once to Undine: "But, should not we get within Kühleborn's power again, down there?" — "Let him come," said she, laughing; "I shall be with you, and in my presence he durst not attempt any mischief."

So the only possible objection seemed removed, and they prepared for departure, and were soon sail-

ing along, full of spirit and of gay hopes. But, O Man! it is not for thee to wonder when the course of events differs widely from the paintings of thy fancy. The treacherous foe, that lures us to our ruin, lulls his victim to rest with sweet music and golden dreams. Our guardian angel, on the contrary, will often rouse us by a sharp and awakening blow.

The first days they spent on the Danube were days of extraordinary enjoyment. The further they floated down the proud stream the nobler and fairer grew the prospect. But, just as they had reached a most lovely district, the first sight of which had promised them great delight, the unruly Kühleborn began openly to give signs of his presence and power. At first they were only sportive tricks, because, whenever he ruffled the stream and raised the wind, Undine repressed him by a word or two, and made him subside at once; but his attempts soon began again, and again Undine was obliged to warn him off; so that the pleasure of the little party was grievously disturbed. To make things worse, the watermen would mutter many a dark surmise into each other's ears, and cast strange looks at the three gentlefolks, whose very servants began to feel suspicion, and to show distrust of their lord. Huldbrand said to himself more than once, "This comes of uniting with other than one's like: a son of earth may not marry a wondrous maid of ocean." To justify himself (as we all love to do) he would add,

"But I did not know she was a maid of ocean. If I am to be pursued and fettered wherever I go by the mad freaks of her relations, mine is the misfortune, not the fault." Such reflections somewhat checked his self-reproaches; but they made him the more disposed to accuse, nay, even to hate Undine. Already he began to scowl upon her, and the poor wife understood but too well his meaning. Exhausted by this, and by her constant exertions against Kühleborn, she sank back one evening in the boat, and was lulled by its gentle motion into a deep sleep.

But no sooner were her eyes closed, than every one in the boat thought he saw, just opposite his own eyes, a terrific human head rising above the water; not like the head of a swimmer, but planted upright on the surface of the river, and keeping pace with the boat. Each turned to his neighbor to show him the cause of his terror, and found him looking equally frightened, but pointing in a different direction, where the half-laughing, half-scowling goblin met his eyes. When at length they tried to explain the matter to each other, crying out, "Look there; no, there!" each of them suddenly perceived the other's phantom, and the water round the boat appeared all alive with ghastly monsters. The cry which burst from every mouth awakened Undine. Before the light of her beaming eyes the the horde of misshapen faces vanished. But Huldbrand was quite exasperated by these fiendish tricks,

and would have burst into loud imprecations, had not Undine whispered in the most beseeching manner, "For God's sake, my own lord, be patient now! remember we are on the water." The Knight kept down his anger, and soon sank into thought. Presently Undine whispered to him: "My love, had not we better give up the foolish journey, and go home to Ringstetten in comfort?" But Huldbrand muttered angrily, "Then I am to be kept a prisoner in my own castle? and even there I may not breathe freely unless the fountain is sealed up? Would to Heaven the absurd connection" — But Undine pressed her soft hand gently upon his lips. And he held his peace, and mused upon all she had previously told him.

In the mean time, Bertalda had yielded herself up to many and strange reflections. She knew something of Undine's origin, but not all! and Kühleborn in particular was only a fearful but vague image in her mind; she had not even once heard his name. And as she pondered these wonderful subjects, she half unconsciously took off a golden necklace which Huldbrand had bought for her of a travelling jeweller a few days before; she held it close to the surface of the river playing with it, and dreamily watching the golden gleam that it shed on the glassy water. Suddenly a large hand came up out of the Danube, snatched the necklace, and ducked under with it. Bertalda screamed aloud, and was answered by a laugh of scorn from the

depths below. And now the Knight could contain himself no longer. Starting up, he gave a loose to his fury, loading with imprecations those who chose to break into his family and private life, and challenging them — were they goblins or sirens — to meet his good sword. Bertalda continued to weep over the loss of her beloved jewel, and her tears were as oil to the flames of his wrath; while Undine kept her hand dipped into the water, with a ceaseless low murmur, only once or twice interrupting her mysterious whispers, to say to her husband in tones of entreaty, "Dearest love, speak not roughly to me here; say whatever you will, only spare me here: you know why!" and he still restrained his tongue (which stammered with passion) from saying a word directly against her. She soon drew her hand from under the water, bringing up a beautiful coral necklace whose glitter dazzled them all. "Take it," said she, offering it kindly to Bertalda: "I have sent for this, instead of the one you lost; do not grieve any more, my poor child." But Huldbrand darted forward, snatched the shining gift from Undine's hand, hurled it again into the water, and roared furiously, "So you still have intercourse with them? In the name of sorcery, go back to them with all your baubles, and leave us men in peace, witch as you are!" With eyes aghast, yet streaming with tears, poor Undine gazed at him, still holding out the hand which had so lovingly presented to Bertalda the bright jewel. Then she wept more and more, like

a sorely injured, innocent child. And at length she said faintly, "Farewell, my dearest; farewell! They shall not lay a finger on thee; only be true to me, that I may still guard thee from them. But I, alas! I must be gone; all this bright morning of life is over. Woe, woe is me! what hast thou done? woe, woe!" And she slipped out of the boat and passed away. Whether she went down into the river, or flowed away with it, none could tell; it was like both and yet like neither. She soon mingled with the waters of the Danube, and nothing was to be heard but the sobbing whispers of the stream as it washed against the boat, seeming to say distinctly, "Woe, woe! Oh be true to me! woe, woe!"

Huldbrand lay flat in the boat, drowned in tears, till a deep swoon came to the unhappy man's relief, and steeped him in oblivion.

CHAPTER XVI.

OF WHAT BEFELL HULDBRAND AFTERWARDS.

Shall we say, Alas, or thank God, that our grief is so often transient? I speak of such grief as has its source in the well-springs of life itself, and seems so identified with our lost friend, as almost to fill up the void he has left; and his hallowed image seems fixed within the sanctuary of our soul, until the signal of our release comes, and sets us free to join him! In truth, a good man will not suffer this sanctuary to be disturbed; yet even with him, it is not the first, the all-engrossing sorrow which abides. New objects will intermingle, and we are compelled to draw from our grief itself a fresh proof of the perishableness of earthly things: alas, then, that our grief is transient!

So it was with the Lord of Ringstetten; whether for his weal or woe, the sequel of this story will show us. At first, he could do nothing but weep abundantly, as his poor kind Undine had wept when he snatched from her the beautiful gift, which she thought would have comforted and pleased them so much. He would then stretch out his hand as she had done, and burst into tears afresh, like her. He

secretly hoped that he might end by altogether dissolving in tears: and are there not many, whose minds have been visited by the same painfully pleasing thought, at some season of great sorrow? Bertalda wept with him, and they lived quietly together at Ringstetten a long while, cherishing the memory of Undine, and seeming to have forgotten their own previous attachment. Moreover, the gentle Undine often appeared to Hulbrand in his dreams; she would caress him meekly and fondly, and depart again with tearful resignation, so that when he awoke, he doubted whose tears they were that bedewed his face — were they her's, or only his own?

But as time went on these visions became less frequent, and the Knight's grief milder; still he might perhaps have spent the rest of his days contentedly, devoting himself to the memory of Undine, and keeping it alive by talking of her, had not the old Fisherman unexpectedly made his appearance, and laid his serious commands upon Bertalda, his daughter, to return home with him. The news of Undine's disappearance had reached him, and he would no longer suffer Bertalda to remain in the castle alone with its lord. "I do not ask whether my daughter cares for me or not," said he; "her character is at stake, and where that is the case, nothing else is worth considering."

This summons from the old man, and the prospect of utter loneliness amid the halls and long galleries of the castle after Bertalda's departure, revived

in Huldbrand's heart the feeling that had lain dormant, and as it were buried under his mourning for Undine, namely, his love for the fair Bertalda. The Fisherman had many objections to their marriage; Undine had been very dear to the old man, and he thought it hardly certain yet that his lost darling was really dead. But, if her corpse were indeed lying stiff and cold in the bed of the Danube, or floating down its stream to the distant ocean, then Bertalda ought to reproach herself for her death, and it ill became her to take the place of her poor victim. However, the Fisherman was very fond of Huldbrand also; the entreaties of his daughter, who was now grown much more gentle and submissive, had their effect, and it seems that he did yield his consent at last; for he remained peaceably at the castle, and an express was sent for Father Heilmann, who in earlier, happier days had blessed Undine's and Huldbrand's union, that he might officiate at the Knight's second marriage.

No sooner had the holy man read the Lord of Ringstetten's letter than he set forth on his way thither, with far greater speed than the messenger had used to reach him. If his straining haste took away his breath, or he felt his aged limbs ache with fatigue, he would say to himself: "I may be in time to prevent a wicked deed; sink not till thou hast reached the goal, my withered frame!" And so he exerted himself afresh, and pushed on, without flagging or halting, till late one evening he entered the shady court of Ringstetten.

The lovers were sitting hand in hand under a tree, with the thoughtful old man near them; as soon as they saw Father Heilmann, they rose eagerly and advanced to meet him. But he, scarcely noticing their civilities, begged the Knight to come with him into the castle. As he stared at this request, and hesitated to comply, the pious old Priest said: "Why, indeed, should I speak to you alone, my Lord of Ringstetten? What I have to say equally concerns the Fisherman and Bertalda; and as they must sooner or later know it, it had better be said now. How can you be certain, Lord Huldbrand, that your own wife is indeed dead? For myself, I can hardly think so. I will not venture to speak of things relating to her wondrous nature; in truth, I have no clear knowledge about it. But a godly and faithful wife she proved herself, beyond all about. And these fourteen nights has she come to my bedside in dreams, wringing her poor hands in anguish, and sighing out, "Oh stop him, dear father! I am yet alive! Oh save his life! Oh save his soul!" I understood not the meaning of the vision till your messenger came; and I have now hastened hither, not to join but to part those hands, which may not be united in holy wedlock. Part from her, Huldbrand! Part from him, Bertalda! He belongs to another; see you not how his cheek turns pale at the thought of his departed wife? Those are not the looks of a bridegroom, and the spirit tells me this. If thou leavest him not now, there is joy for

thee no more." They all three felt at the bottom of their hearts that Father Heilmann's words were true; but they would not yield to them. Even the old Fisherman was so blinded, as to think that what had been settled between them for so many days, could not now be relinquished. So they resisted the Priest's warnings, and urged the fulfillment of their wishes with headlong, gloomy determination, till Father Heilmann departed with a melancholy shake of the head, without accepting even for one night their proffered hospitalities, or tasting any of the refreshments they set before him. But Huldbrand persuaded himself that the old Priest was a weak dotard; and early next morning he sent to a monk from the nearest cloister, who readily promised to come and marry them in a few days.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE KNIGHT'S DREAM.

THE morning twilight was beginning to dawn, and the Knight lay half-awake on his couch. Whenever he dropped asleep he was scared by mysterious terrors, and started up as if sleep were peopled by phantoms. If he woke up in earnest, he felt himself fanned all around by what seemed like swans' wings, and soothed by watery airs, which lulled him back again into the half-unconscious, twilight state. At length he did fall asleep and fancied himself lifted by swans on their soft wings, and carried far away over lands and seas, all to the sound of their sweetest melody. "Swans singing! swans singing!" thought he continually; is not that the strain of Death?" Presently he found himself hovering above a vast sea. A swan warbled in his ear that it was the Mediterranean; and as he looked down into the deep it became like clear crystal, transparent to the bottom. This rejoiced him much, for he could see Undine sitting in a brilliant hall of crystal.

She was shedding tears, indeed, and looked sadly changed since the happy times which they had spent together at Ringstetten; happiest at first, but happy

also a short time since, just before the fatal sail on the Danube. The contrast struck Huldbrand deeply; but Undine did not seem to be aware of his presence. Kühleborn soon came up to her, and began rating her for weeping. She composed herself, and looked at him with a firmness and dignity, before which he almost quailed. "Though I am condemned to live under these deep waters," said she, "I have brought my soul with me; therefore my tears cannot be understood by thee. But to me they are blessings, like every thing that belongs to a loving soul." He shook his head incredulously, and said, after a pause: "Nevertheless, niece, you are still subject to the laws of our element; and you know you must execute sentence of death upon him as soon as he marries again, and breaks faith with you." — "To this hour he is a widower," said Undine, "and loves and mourns me truly." — "Ah, but he will be a bridegroom soon," said Kühleborn with a sneer; "wait a couple of days only, and the marriage blessing will have been given, and you must go up and put the criminal to death." — "I cannot!" answered the smiling Undine. "I have had the fountain sealed up, against myself and my whole race." "But suppose he leaves his castle," said Kühleborn, "or forgets himself so far as to let them set the fountain 'free;' for he thinks mighty little of those matters." — "And that is why," said Undine, still smiling through her tears, "that is why his spirit hovers at this moment over the Mediterranean, and listens to

our conversation as in a dream. I have contrived it on purpose, that he may take warning." On hearing this Kühleborn looked up angrily at the Knight, scowled at him, stamped, and then shot upwards through the waves like an arrow. His fury seemed to make him expand into a whale. Again the swans began to warble, to wave their wings, and to fly; the Knight felt himself borne high over alps and rivers, till he was deposited in the Castle of Ringstetten, and awoke in his bed.

He did awake in his bed, just as one of his squires entered the room, and told him that Father Heilmann was still lingering near the castle; for he had found him the evening before in the forest, living in a shed he had made for himself with branches and moss. On being asked what he was staying for, since he had refused to bless the betrothed couple? he answered, "It is not the wedded only who stand in need of prayer; and though I came not for the bridal, there may yet be work for me of another kind. We must be prepared for every thing. Sometimes marriage and mourning are not so far apart; and he who does not willfully close his eyes may perceive it." The Knight built all manner of strange conjectures upon these words, and upon his dream. But if once a man has formed a settled purpose, it is hard indeed to shake it. The end of this was, that their plans remained unchanged.

CHAPTER XVIII.

OF THE KNIGHT HULDBRAND'S SECOND BRIDAL.

WERE I to tell you how the wedding-day at Ringstetten passed, you might imagine yourself contemplating a glittering heap of gay objects, with a black crape thrown over them, through which the splendid pageant, instead of delighting the eye, would look like a mockery of all earthly joys. Not that the festive meeting was disturbed by any spectral apparitions: we have seen that the castle was safe from any intrusion of the malicious water sprites. But the Knight, the Fisherman, and all the guests were haunted by a feeling that the chief person, the soul of the feast, was missing; and who was she but the gentle, beloved Undine? As often as they heard a door open, every eye turned involuntarily toward it, and when nothing ensued but the entrance of the steward with some more dishes, or of the cupbearer with a fresh supply of rich wine, the guests would look sad and blank, and the sparks of gayety kindled by the light jest or the cheerful discourse, were quenched in the damp of melancholy recollections. The bride was the most thoughtless, and consequently the most cheerful person present; but even

she, at moments, felt it unnatural to be sitting at the head of the table, decked out in her wreath of green and her embroidery of gold, while Undine's corpse was lying cold and stiff in the bed of the Danube, or floating down its stream to the ocean. For, ever since her father had used these words, they had been ringing in her ears, and to-day especially they pursued her without ceasing.

The party broke up before night had closed in; not, as usual, dispersed by the eager impatience of the bridegroom to be alone with his bride; but dropping off listlessly, as a general gloom spread over the assembly; Bertalda was followed to her dressing-room by her women only, and the Knight by his pages. At this gloomy feast, there was no question of the gay and sportive train of bridesmaids and young men, who usually attend the wedded pair.

Bertalda tried to call up brighter thoughts; she bade her women display before her a splendid set of jewels, the gift of Huldbrand, together with her richest robes and veils, that she might select the gayest and handsomest dress for the morrow. Her maids seized the opportunity of wishing their young mistress all manner of joy, nor did they fail to extol the beauty of the bride to the skies. Bertalda, however, glanced at herself in the glass, and sighed: "Ah, but look at the freckles just here, on my throat!" They looked and found it was indeed so, but called them beauty spots that would only enhance the fairness of her delicate skin. Bertalda

shook her head, and replied, "Still it is a blemish; and I once might have cured it!" said she with a deep sigh. "But the fountain in the court is stopped up, — that fountain which used to supply me with precious, beautifying water. If I could but get one jugful to-day!" — "Is that all?" cried an obsequious attendant, and slipped out of the room. "Why, she will not be so mad," asked Bertalda in a tone of complacent surprise, "as to make them raise the stone this very night?" And now she heard men's footsteps crossing the court; and on looking down from her window, she saw the officious handmaid conducting them straight to the fountain; they carried levers and other tools upon their shoulders. "Well, it is my will to be sure," said Bertalda, smiling, "provided they are not too long about it." And, elated by the thought that a hint from her could now effect what had once been denied to her entreaties, she watched the progress of the work in the moonlit court below.

The men began straining themselves to lift the huge stone; occasionally a sigh was heard, as some one recollected that they were now reversing their dear lady's commands. But the task proved lighter than they had expected. Some power from beneath seemed to second their efforts, and help the stone upward. "Why!" said the astonished workmen to each other, "it feels as if the spring below had turned into a waterspout." More and more did the stone heave, till, without any impulse from the men,

it rolled heavily along the pavement with a hollow sound. But, from the mouth of the spring arose, slowly and solemnly, what looked like a column of water; at first they thought so, but presently saw that it was no waterspout, but the figure of a pale woman, veiled in white. She was weeping abundantly, wringing her hands and clasping them over her head, while she proceeded with slow and measured step toward the castle. The crowd of servants fell back from the spot; while, pale and aghast, the bride and her women looked on from the window.

When the figure had arrived just under that window, she raised her tearful face for a moment, and Bertalda thought she recognized Undine's pale features through the veil. The shadowy form moved on slowly and reluctantly, like one sent to execution. Bertalda screamed out that the Knight must be called; no one durst stir a foot, and the bride herself kept silence, frightened at the sound of her own voice.

While these remained at the window, as if rooted to the spot, the mysterious visitor had entered the castle, and passed up the well-known stairs, and through the familiar rooms, still weeping silently. Alas! how differently had she trodden those floors in days gone by!

The Knight had now dismissed his train; half-undressed, and in a dejected mood, he was standing near a large mirror, by the light of a dim taper. He heard the door tapped by a soft, soft touch. It was

thus Undine had been wont to knock, when she meant to steal upon him playfully. "It is all fancy!" thought he. "The bridal bed awaits me." — "Yes, but it is a cold one," said a weeping voice from without; and the mirror then showed him the door opening slowly, and the white form coming in, and closing the door gently behind her. "They have opened the mouth of the spring," murmured she; "and now I am come, and now must thou die." His beating heart told him this was indeed true; but he pressed his hands over his eyes, and said: "Do not bewilder me with terror in my last moments. If thy veil conceals the features of a spectre, hide them from me still, and let me die in peace." — "Alas!" rejoined the forlorn one, "wilt thou not look upon me once again? I am fair, as when thou didst woo me on the promontory." — "Oh, could that be true!" sighed Huldbrand, "and if I might die in thy embrace!" — "Be it so, my dearest," said she. And she raised her veil, and the heavenly radiance of her sweet countenance beamed upon him.

Trembling, at once with love and awe, the Knight approached her; she received him with a tender embrace; but instead of relaxing her hold, she pressed him more closely to her heart, and wept as if her soul would pour itself out. Drowned in her tears and his own, Huldbrand felt his heart sink within him, and at last he fell lifeless from the fond arms of Undine upon his pillow.

"I have wept him to death!" said she to the pages, whom she passed in the antechamber; and she glided slowly through the crowd, and went back to the fountain.

CHAPTER XIX.

HOW THE KNIGHT HULDBRAND WAS INTERRED.

Father Heilmann had returned to the castle, as soon as he heard of the Lord of Ringstetten's death, and he appeared there just after the monk, who had married the hapless pair, had fled full of alarm and horror. "It is well," answered Heilmann, when told this: "now is the time for my office; I want no assistant." He addressed spiritual exhortations to the widowed bride, but little impression could be made on so worldly and thoughtless a mind. The old Fisherman, although grieved to the heart, resigned himself more readily to the awful dispensation; and when Bertalda kept calling Undine a witch and a murderer, the old man calmly answered: "The stroke could not be turned away. For my part, I see only the hand of God therein; and none grieved more deeply over Huldbrand's sentence, than she who was doomed to inflict it, the poor forsaken Undine!" And he helped to arrange the funeral ceremonies in a manner suitable to the high rank of the dead. He was to be buried in a neighboring hamlet, whose churchyard contained the graves of all his ancestors, and which he had himself enriched with

many noble gifts. His helmet and coat of arms lay upon the coffin, about to be lowered into earth with his mortal remains; for Lord Huldbrand of Ringstetten was the last of his race.

The mourners began their dismal procession, and the sound of their solemn dirge rose into the calm blue depths of heaven: Heilmann walked first, bearing on high a crucifix, and the bereaved Bertalda followed leaning on her aged father. Suddenly, amid the crowd of mourners who composed the widow's train, appeared a snow-white figure, deeply veiled, with hands uplifted in an attitude of intense grief. Those that stood near her felt a shudder creep over them; they shrank back, and thus increased the alarm of those whom the stranger next approached, so that confusion gradually spread itself through the whole train. Here and there was to be found a soldier bold enough to address the figure, and attempt to drive her away; but she always eluded their grasp, and the next moment reappeared among the rest, moving along with slow and solemn step. At length, when the attendants had all fallen back, she found herself close behind Bertalda, and now slackened her pace to the very slowest measure, so that the widow was not aware of her presence. No one disturbed her again, while she meekly and reverently glided on behind her.

So they advanced till they reached the churchyard, when the whole procession formed a circle round the open grave. Bertalda then discovered the

unbidden guest, and half-angry, half-frightened, she forbade her to come near the Knight's resting-place. But the veiled form gently shook her head, and extended her hands in humble entreaty; this gesture reminded Bertalda of poor Undine, when she gave her the coral necklace on the Danube, and she could not but weep. Father Heilmann enjoined silence; for they had begun to heap earth over the grave, and were about to offer up solemn prayers around it. Bertalda knelt down in silence, and all her followers did the same. When they arose, lo, the white form had vanished! and on the spot where she had knelt, a bright silvery brook now gushed out of the turf, and flowed round the Knight's tomb, till it had almost wholly encircled it; then it ran further on, and emptied itself into a shady pool which bounded one side of the churchyard. From that time forth, the villagers are said to have shown travellers this clear spring, and they still believe it to be the poor forsaken Undine, who continues thus to twine her arms round her beloved lord.

THE TWO CAPTAINS.

THE TWO CAPTAINS.

CHAPTER I.

A MILD summer evening rested on the sea-shore near the city of Malaga, awakening the guitar of many a cheerful singer, as well from the ships in the harbor as from the houses in the city and the ornamental garden-dwellings around. These melodious tones emulated the voices of the birds as they greeted the refreshing breezes and floated from the meadows over this enchanting region.

Some troops of infantry were on the strand, and purposed to pass the night there, that they might be ready to embark at the earliest dawn of morning. This pleasant evening made them forget that they ought to devote to sleep their last hours on European ground; they began to sing war-songs, and to drink long life to the mighty Emperor Charles V., now beleaguering the pirate-nest of Tunis, and to whose assistance they were about to sail.

These happy soldiers were not all of one race. Only two banners waved for Spain; the third bore the German colors; and the difference of manners

and speech had often previously given rise to much bantering. Now, however, thoughts of the approaching voyage, and the dangers they would share together, as well as the enjoyment which this lovely southern evening poured through soul and sense, united the comrades in full and undisturbed concord. The Germans tried to speak Spanish, and the Spaniards German, without its recurring to any one to remark the blunders and mistakes that were made. Each helped the other; thinking only how best to gain the good-will of his companion by means of his own language.

Apart from this noisy group, a young German captain, Sir Heimbert of Waldhausen, was reclining under a cork-tree, and looking up to the stars with a steadfast and solemn gaze, very different from the frank, social spirit which his comrades knew and loved in him so well. A Spanish captain, named Don Frederigo Mendez, approached him. He was as young, and as much accustomed to martial exercises; but his disposition was as reserved and thoughtful as Heimbert's was gentle and frank. "Pardon me, señor," began the solemn Spaniard, "if I disturb your meditations; but I have so often known you as a courageous warrior and faithful companion in arms, in the many hot fights in which I have had the honor to see you, that I would choose you before all others for a knightly service, if it will not interfere with your own plans and projects for this evening."

"Dear sir," frankly returned Heimbert, "I have an affair of importance to transact before sunrise; but till midnight I am right willing and ready to render you any service as a brother in arms."

"Enough," said Frederigo; "for before midnight must the tones have long ceased, in which I take leave of the dearest creature I have known in my native city. But, that you may understand the whole affair, as my noble companion should, listen to me attentively for a few moments:—

"Some time before I left Malaga to join our great emperor's army, and to assist in spreading the glory of his arms in Italy, I served, after the manner of young knights, a damsel of this city, the beautiful Lucilla. She stood hardly on the border that divides childhood from growing womanhood; and as I, then a mere boy, offered my homage with friendly childlike mind, so my young mistress in similar guise received it.

"At last I went to Italy, as you very well know, who were my companion in many a hot fight, as well as in many a magic and tempting scene in that luxurious land. Through all our changes I held the image of my gentle mistress steadfastly, and never once relinquished the service and faith I had vowed to her; though I will not conceal from you that it was more to fulfill the word I had pledged at my departure than from any immoderate glowing feeling of my heart. When we returned to my native city, a few weeks since, I found my lady married to one

of the richest and most distinguished knights of Malaga. Fiercer far than love, jealousy (that almost almighty child of heaven and hell) now spurred me on to follow Lucilla's steps. From her dwelling to the church — from thence to the houses of her friends, and, again to her home; and even, as far as possible, into the circle of knights and ladies which surrounds her, I unweariedly pursued her. I thus assured myself that no other young knight attended her, and that she had entirely devoted herself to the husband her parents had selected for her, although he was not the one of her heart's choice. This so fully contented me, that I should not have had occasion to trouble you at this moment, if Lucilla had not approached me the other day, and whispered in my ear, that I should not provoke her husband, for he was very passionate and bold; to herself it threatened no danger — not the least — because he loved and honored her above all things; but upon that very account would his anger fall more fearfully upon me. You can now easily understand, my noble comrade, that to preserve my character for contempt of danger, I must now pursue Lucilla's steps more closely than ever, and sing nightly serenades beneath her flowery window till the morning star makes its mirror in the sea. At midnight, Lucilla's husband sets out for Madrid, and after that hour I will carefully avoid the street in which she dwells; but until then, as soon as the evening is sufficiently advanced, I will not cease to sing love-romances before his

house. I have learnt that not only he, but also Lucilla's brothers have engaged in the quarrel; and it is this, señor, which makes me request for a short time the assistance of your good sword."

Heimbert warmly seized the Spaniard's hand, and said, "To show you, dear sir, how willingly I undertake what you wish, I will meet your confidence with like frankness, and relate a pleasant incident which happened to me in this city, and beg you, after midnight, to render me a little service. My story is short, and will not detain you longer than we must wait for the twilight to become deep enough to begin your serenade.

"The day after we arrived here, I was amusing myself in one of the beautiful gardens which surround us. I have now been long in these southern lands, but I believe the dreams which every night carry me back to my German home are the cause of my finding everything about me here so strange and astonishing still. At all events, when I wake each morning I wonder anew, as if I was just arrived. I was then wandering among the aloes, and under the laurel and oleander trees, as one bewildered. Suddenly I heard a cry near me, and a young lady, dressed in white, flew into my arms and fainted away, while her companions separated in every direction. A soldier has always his senses about him, and I soon perceived a furious bull pursuing the beautiful damsel. Quickly I threw her over a flowery hedge, and sprang after myself, whilst the beast, blind with

rage, passed us by; and I could afterwards hear no more of it, than that it had escaped from a neighboring court-yard, where some youths were trying to commence a bull-fight, and had broken furiously into this garden.

"I was now alone with the senseless lady in my arms; and she was so wondrously beautiful that I have never in my whole life felt happier or sadder than at that moment. I laid her upon the grass, and sprinkled her angel brow with water from a fountain near us. At last she came to herself, and as she opened her lovely eyes, I thought I now knew how the blessed spirits look in heaven.

"She thanked me with grateful and courteous words, and called me her knight. But I was so enchanted, I could not utter a word; and she must almost have thought me dumb. At length my speech returned; and I ventured to breathe a request — which came from my heart — that the lovely lady would often give me the happiness of seeing her in this garden, for the few weeks I should remain here, till the service of the emperor should drive me forth to the burning sands of Africa. She looked at me, half smiling, half sadly, and murmured, 'Yes.' And she has kept her word, and appeared there daily, without our having yet ventured to speak to one another. For though we were sometimes quite alone, I could not do more than enjoy the happiness of walking by her side. Often she has sung to me; and I have answered her in song. When I yester-

day informed her that our departure was so near, I fancied there was a tear in her heavenly eye; and I must have looked very sorrowful also, for she said, consolingly, 'Ah, pious, childlike warrior! one may confide in you as in an angel. After midnight, before the twilight summons you to embark, I give you leave to say farewell to me in this place. If you could find a faithful friend, whose silence you could depend on, to watch the entrance from the street, it might be as well; for many soldiers will be at that time returning from their last carouse in the city.' Now God has sent me such a friend; and I shall go joyfully to the lovely maiden."

"I wish the service you require had more danger," answered Frederigo, "that I might better prove to you how faithfully I would serve you with life and limb. But come, noble brother! the hour of my adventure is arrived."

Frederigo took a guitar under his arm; and wrapping themselves in their mantles, the young captains hastily made their way to the city.

The night-violets before Lucilla's window were pouring forth their sweet perfume, when Frederigo, leaning in the angle of an old wide shadowing church opposite, began to tune his guitar. Heimbert placed himself behind a pillar, his drawn sword under his mantle, and his clear blue eyes, like two watching stars, quietly penetrating around.

Frederigo sang:—

"Fair in the spring-bright meadows grew
A little flower in May,
And rosy-tinted petals threw
A blush upon its snowy hue,
Beneath the snowy ray.

"To me, a youth, that little flower
My soul's delight became;
And often then, in happy hour,
I taught my tongue with courteous power
Some flattering lay to frame.

"But ah! from where the floweret stood
In delicate array,
Was I to distant scenes of blood,
To foreign lands, o'er field and flood,
Soon summoned far away.

"And now I am returned again,
I seek my lovely flower:
But all my hopeful search is vain;
Transplanted from its grassy plain,
My flower is free no more.

"A gardener has the treasure found,
And claimed it for his prize:
Now cherished in a guarded bound,
And hedged with golden lattice round,
She is denied mine eyes.

"His lattice he may freely twine,
His jealous bars I grant:
But *all* I need not yet resign;
For still this pure delight is mine,
Her wondrous praise to chant.

"And, wandering in the coolness there,
I'll touch my cithern's string,
Still celebrate the floweret fair;
While e'en the gardener shall not dare
Forbid my voice to sing."

"That remains to be proved, señor," said a man, stepping close, and, as he thought, unobserved, to Frederigo. He had been apprised of the stranger's approach by a signal from his watchful friend, and answered with the greatest coolness: "If you wish to commence a suit with my guitar, señor, you will find she has a tongue of steel, which has already on many occasions done her excellent service. With which do you wish to speak? — with the guitar, or with the advocate?"

While the stranger hesitated what to reply to this bold speech, Heimbert perceived two mantled figures draw near, and remain standing a few steps from him — one behind the other, so as to cut off Frederigo's flight, if he had intended to escape.

"I believe, dear sirs," said Sir Heimbert, in a friendly manner, "we are here on the same errand: to take care that no one intrudes upon the conference of yonder knights. At least, that is my business. And I can assure you, that any one who attempts to interfere with their affair shall receive my dagger in his heart. You see we shall best fulfill our duty by remaining still." The two gentlemen bowed courteously, and were silent.

So astonishing was the quiet self-possession with which the two soldiers carried on their affair, that their three companions were at a loss to imagine how they would commence their quarrel. At last Frederigo again touched his guitar, and appeared about to begin another song. At this mark of contempt

and unconsciousness of danger, Lucilla's husband (for it was he who had taken his stand by Don Frederigo) was so enraged that he, without further delay, snatched his sword from its sheath, and called out in a voice of suppressed rage: "Draw! or I shall stab you!"

"Very willingly, señor," answered Frederigo, composedly. "You have no need to threaten me, and might quite as well have spoken quietly." So saying, he laid his guitar in a niche in the church wall, seized his weapon, and, bowing gracefully to his adversary, the fight began.

For some time the two figures by Heimbert's side, who were Lucilla's brothers, remained quite quiet; but as Frederigo began to get the better of their brother-in-law, they made a movement, as if they would take part in the fight. At this, Heimbert made his good sword gleam in the moonlight, and said: "Dear sirs, you surely would not wish me to put my threat into execution. Pray do not oblige me to do so; for if it cannot be otherwise, doubt not I shall keep my word." The two young men remained from this time quite motionless, surprised at the cheerful, truehearted friendliness of all Heimbert's words.

Meanwhile had Frederigo, though pressing hard upon his adversary, yet carefully avoided wounding him; and at last, by a dexterous movement, he wrested his weapon from him; so that Lucilla's husband, in the surprise and shock of this unexpected advantage, retreated a few steps. Frederigo threw

the sword in the air, and adroitly catching it near the point as it descended, said, as he offered the ornamented hilt to his opponent: "Take it, señor; and I hope this matter is ended; and you now understand that I am only here to show I fear no danger in the world. The bell tolls twelve from the old dome; and I give you my word of honor, as a knight and a soldier, that neither is Doña Lucilla pleased with my attentions, nor should I, if I lived a hundred years in Malaga, continue to serenade her. So pursue your journey in peace; and farewell." Then he once more greeted his conquered adversary with solemn, stern courtesy, and withdrew Heimbert followed him, after he had cordially shaken hands with the two brothers, saying: "Never let it again enter your heads, dear young gentlemen, to interfere in an honorable fight. Do you understand me?"

He soon overtook his companion, and walked by his side in silence — his heart beating with joy, sorrow, and expectation. Don Frederigo Mendez was also silent, till Heimbert stopped before a garden-door overhung with fruitful orange-boughs, and pointing to a pomegranate-tree laden with fruit, said: "We are at the place, dear comrade." Then the Spaniard appeared about to ask a question; but he checked himself, and merely said: "Understand me; you have my word of honor to protect this entrance for you till the hour of dawn." He began walking to and fro before the gate with drawn sword, like a sentinel; whilst Heimbert, trembling with joy, hastened through the dark groves within.

CHAPTER II.

He had not far to seek the lovely star which he so deeply felt was the one destined to shed its light over his whole life. The full moon revealed to him the slender form of the lady walking near the entrance. She wept softly, and yet smiled with such composure, that her tears seemed rather to resemble a decoration of pearls than a veil of sorrow.

The lovers wandered silently beside one another through the flowery pathway, half in sorrow, half in joy; while sometimes the night air touched the guitar on the lady's arm so lightly, that a slight murmur blended with the song of the nightingale; or her delicate fingers on the strings awoke a few fleeting chords, and the shooting stars seemed as if they would pursue the retreating tones of the guitar.

Oh how truly blessed was this hour to the youth and maiden! for now neither rash wishes nor impure desires had any place in their minds. They walked side by side, satisfied that the good God had granted them this happiness; and so little desiring anything further, that the fleeting and perishable nature of the present floated away in the background of their thoughts. In the midst of this beautiful garden they

found a large open lawn, ornamented with statues, and surrounding a fountain. On the edge of this the lovers sat down, alternately fixing their eyes on the water sparkling in the moonlight and on one another. The maiden touched her guitar; and Heimbert, compelled by some irresistible impulse, sang the following words to it: —

"A sweet, sweet life have I,
But cannot name its charm;
O, would it teach me consciously,
That so my lips, in calm,
Soft, gentle songs, should ever praise
What my fond spirit endless says."

He suddenly stopped, and blushed, for he feared he had said too much. The lady blushed also; and after playing some time, half-abstractedly, on the strings, she sang as if still in a dream: —

"Who beside the youth is singing,
Seated on the tender grass,
Where the moon her light is flinging,
And the sparkling waters pass?

"Shall the maid reveal her name,
When, though still unknown it be,
Glows her trembling cheek with shame,
And her heart beats anxiously?

"First let the knight be nam'd — 'tis he
Who, in his bright array,
With Spaniards stood triumphantly
Upon the glorious day.

"Who before Pavia bravely fought,
A boy of sixteen years:

Pride to his country hath he brought,
And to his foemen fears.

"Heimbert is his noble name;
Victor he in many a fight;
Doña Clara feels no shame,
Sitting by so brave a knight.

"In her name's soft sound revealing,
Seated on the tender grass,
Where the moonbeams' light is stealing,
And the sparkling waters pass."

"Ah," said Heimbert, blushing more deeply than before, "O, Doña Clara, that affair at Pavia was a very insignificant feat of arms; and if it had deserved a reward, what could better serve as one than the surpassing bliss which I now enjoy? Now I know what your name is, and dare address you by it, you angel bright, Doña Clara! you blessed and beautiful Doña Clara! Only tell me who has made so favorable a report of my youthful deeds, that I may ever think of him gratefully."

"Can the noble Heimbert of Waldhausen suppose," replied Clara, that the warriors of Spain sent no sons where he stood in battle? You have surely seen them near you in the fight; and how, then, can it surprise you that your glories are known here?"

They now heard the silvery tones of a little bell from the neighboring palace, and Clara whispered, "It is time to part: adieu, my hero!" And she smiled on Heimbert through her tears; and as she bent towards him, he almost fancied he felt a gentle

kiss breathed on his lips. When he looked around, Clara had disappeared: the morning clouds began to assume the rosy tint of dawn, and he rejoined his watchful friend at the entrance-door, with a whole heaven of love's proud happiness in his heart.

"Stand! no further!" exclaimed Frederigo, as Heimbert appeared from the garden, holding, at the same time, his drawn sword towards him.

"Oh, you are mistaken, my good comrade," said the German, laughing; "it is I whom you see before you."

"Don't imagine, Sir Heimbert of Waldhausen, that I mistake you," said Frederigo; "but I have kept my word, and honorably fulfilled my promise to be your guard in this place; and now I demand of you to draw without further delay, and fight for your life."

"Alas!" sighed Heimbert, "I have often heard that there are witches in these southern lands, who have the power to deprive people of their senses with their magic arts and charms, but till to-day I have never experienced anything of the sort. Think better of it, my dear comrade, and go with me to the shore."

Frederigo smiled scornfully, and answered, "Leave off your silly nonsense; and if one must explain everything to you, word by word, before you understand it, I will tell you that the lady you came to meet in this my garden, Doña Clara Mendez, is my only and dearest sister. Now lose no further time, and draw, señor."

"God forbid!" exclaimed the German, without touching his weapon: "you shall be my brother-in-law, Frederigo, and not my murderer, still less will I be yours."

Frederigo shook his head angrily, and advanced with measured steps towards his companion. Heimbert, however, continued motionless, and said, "No, Frederigo, I can never do *you* any harm; for not only do I love your sister, but you must certainly be the person who has spoken to her so honorably of my battle-deeds in Italy."

"If I did so," answered Frederigo, "I was a fool. But thou, thou weak coward, draw thy sword, or" —

Frederigo had hardly spoken these words, before Heimbert, glowing with indignation, snatched his sword from its sheath, exclaiming, "This the devil himself could not bear!" And now the two young captains fiercely closed upon one another.

This was quite another battle to that which Frederigo had previously fought with Lucilla's husband. The two soldiers well understood their weapons, and boldly strove with one another; the light gleamed from their swords, as first one and then the other made a deadly thrust with the speed of lightning, which his adversary as speedily turned aside. Firmly they planted the left foot, as if rooted in the earth, the right advanced one step to make each onset, and then quickly withdrawn to recover their footing. From the resolution and quiet self-possession with which both combatants fought, it was easy to see that

one or other of them must find his grave beneath the orange-trees, whose overhanging boughs were now illuminated by the glow of morning. This would certainly have been the case, had not the report of a cannon from the harbor reached them.

The combatants stopped as at an understood signal, and silently counted till thirty, when a second gun was heard. "That is the signal for embarkation, señor," said Frederigo; "we are now in the emperor's service, and all fighting is unlawful which is not against the foes of Charles the Fifth. We must defer our combat until the termination of the war."

The two captains hastened to the shore, and were engaged in the embarkation of their troops. The sun, rising from the sea, shone at once on the ships and the water.

CHAPTER III.

The voyagers had for some time to contend with contrary winds; and when at last the coast of Barbary became visible, the evening closed so deeply over the sea that no pilot in the little squadron would venture nearer land, and they anchored in the calm sea. They crossed themselves, and anxiously waited for the morning; while the soldiers, full of hope and anticipation of honor, assembled in groups upon the decks, straining their eyes to see the long-desired scene of their glory.

Meanwhile the heavy firing of besiegers and besieged thundered unceasingly from the fortress of Goletta; and as the heavy clouds of night thickened over the shore, the flames of the burning houses in the city became more visible, and the course of the fiery shots could be distinctly traced as they crossed each other in their path of frightful devastation. It was evident that the Mussulmans had sallied forth, for a sharp fire of musketry was suddenly heard amidst the roaring of the cannon. The fight now approached the trenches of the Christians; and from the ships they could hardly see whether the besiegers were in danger or not. At last they perceived that

the Turks were driven back into the fortress: thither the Christian host pursued them, and loud shouts of victory were heard from the Spanish camp — Goletta was taken!

The troops on board the ships were composed of young courageous men; and how their hearts glowed and beat high at this glorious spectacle need not be detailed to those who carry a brave heart in their own bosoms; while to any other, all description would be thrown away.

Heimbert and Frederigo stood near one another. "I know not," said the latter, "what it is which tells me that to-morrow I must plant my standard upon yonder height, which is so brightly lighted up by the burning brands in Goletta."— "That is just my feeling," said Heimbert. Then the two captains were silent, and turned angrily away.

The wished-for morning at last arose, the ships neared the shore, and the troops landed, while an officer was immediately dispatched to apprise the mighty general Alva of the arrival of this reinforcement. The soldiers hastily ranged themselves on the beach, and were soon in battle-order, to await the inspection of their great leader.

Clouds of dust appeared in the gray twilight, and the officer, hastening back, announced the approach of the general. And because, in the language of Castile, *Alva* signifies "morning," the Spaniards raised a shout of triumph at the happy omen they perceived in the first beams of the rising sun and

the head of the general's staff becoming visible together.

Alva's stern pale face soon appeared: he was mounted upon a large Andalusian charger of the deepest black, and galloped up and down the lines once; then, halting in the middle, looked over the ranks with a scrutinizing eye, and said, with evident satisfaction, "You pass muster well. 'Tis as it should be. I like to see you in such order, and can perceive that, notwithstanding your youth, you are tried soldiers. We will first hold a review, and then I will lead you to something more interesting."

He dismounted, and, walking to the right wing, began to inspect one troop after another in the closest manner, summoning each captain to his side, and exacting from him an account of the most minute particulars. Sometimes a cannón-ball from the fortress whistled over the heads of the soldiers; and then Alva would stand still, and closely observe their countenances. When he saw that no eye moved, a contented smile spread itself over his solemn face.

When he had thus examined both divisions, he remounted his horse, and again placed himself in the middle. Stroking his long beard, he said, "You are in such good order, soldiers, that you shall take your part in the glorious day which now dawns for our Christian Armada. We will take Barbarossa! Do you hear the drums and fifes in the camp? and see him sally forth to meet the emperor? Yonder is the place for you!"

"Vivat Carolus Quintus!" resounded through the ranks. Alva beckoned the captains to him, and appointed to each his duty. He was used to mingle the German and Spanish troops together, that emulation might increase their courage; and on the present occasion it happened that Heimbert and Frederigo were commanded to storm the height which, now illumined by the beams of morning, they recognized as the very same that had appeared so inviting the night before.

The cannons roared, and the trumpets sounded, the colors waved proudly in the breeze, and the leaders gave the word "March!" when the troops rushed on all sides to the battle.

Thrice had Frederigo and Heimbert almost forced their way through a breach in the wall of the fortifications on the height, and thrice were they repulsed, by the fierce resistance of the Turks, into the valley below. The Mussulmans shouted after the retreating foe, clashed their weapons furiously together, and contemptuously laughing, asked whether any one would again venture to give heart and brain to the cimeter, and his body to the rolling stones. The two captains, gnashing their teeth with fury, rearranged their ranks, in order to fill the places of the slain and mortally wounded in these three fruitless attacks. Meanwhile a murmur ran through the Christian host, that a witch fought for the enemy, and helped them to conquer.

At this moment Duke Alva rode up to them; he

looked sharply at the breach they had made. "Could you not break through the foe *here?*" said he, shaking his head. "This surprises me; for from you two youths, and your troops, I expected better things."

"Do you hear, do you hear *that?*" cried the captains, pacing through their lines.

The soldiers shouted loudly, and demanded to be led once more against the enemy. Even those mortally wounded exerted their last breath to cry, "Forward, comrades!"

Swift as an arrow had the great Alva leapt from his horse, and, seizing a partisan from the stiff hand of one of the slain, he placed himself before them, and cried, "I will have part in your glory! In the name of God and of the Blessed Virgin, forward, my children!"

They rushed joyfully up the hill, all hearts reanimated, and raising their war-cry to heaven, while a few already cried, "Victoria! Victoria!" and the Mussulmans seemed to give way. Then, like the vision of an avenging angel, a maiden, dressed in richly embroidered garments of purple and gold, appeared in the Turkish ranks; and those who were terrified before, now shouted, "Allah!" and accompanied that name with "Zelinda, Zelinda!" The maiden drew a small box from beneath her arm; and, after opening and breathing into it, threw it among the Christian army. A wild explosion from this destructive engine scattered through the host a whole fire of rockets, grenades, and other fearful

messengers of death. The astounded troops held on through the storm. "On, on!" cried Alva; and "On!" echoed the two captains. But at that moment, a flaming bolt fastened on the duke's high-plumed cap, and burnt and crackled about his head, so that the general fell fainting down the height. Then the Spanish and German troops were generally routed, and fled hurriedly from the fearful height before the storm. The Mussulmans again shouted, and Zelinda's beauty shone over the conquering host like a baleful star.

When Alva opened his eyes, he saw Heimbert standing over him, his clothes, face, and arms scorched by the fire he had with much difficulty extinguished on his commander's head, when a second body of flame rolled down the height in the same manner. The duke was thanking the youth for his preservation, when some soldiers came by, who told him the Saracen power had commenced an attack on the opposite wing of the army. Alva threw himself on the first horse they brought him, and without losing a word, dashed to the place where the threatened danger called him.

Frederigo's glowing eye was fixed on the rampart where the brilliant lady stood, with her snow-white arm extended in the act of hurling a two-edged spear; sometimes encouraging the Mussulmans in Arabic, then again speaking scornfully to the Christians in Spanish. Don Frederigo exclaimed, "O foolish lady! she thinks to daunt me, and yet places

herself before me, — so tempting, so irresistible a war prize!"

And, as if magic wings had grown from his shoulders, he began to fly up the height with such swiftness, that Alva's storm-flight from thence appeared a lazy snail's pace. Before any one could see how, he had gained the height, and wresting spear and shield from the lady, he seized her in his arms, and attempted to bear her away as his prize, while Zelinda clung with both hands to the palisade in anxious despair. Her cries for help were unavailing; partly because the Turks were stupefied with astonishment to see the magic power of the lady overcome by the almost magic deed of the youth, and partly because the faithful Heimbert, immediately on perceiving his companion's enterprise, had led both troops to his support, and now stood by his side, fighting hand to hand with the besieged. This time the fury of the Mussulmans, overcome as they were by surprise and superstition, availed nothing against the prowess of the Christian soldiers.

The Spaniards and Germans broke through the enemy, assisted by fresh squadrons of their army. The Mohammedans fled with frightful howling; and the banner of the Holy German Empire, and that of the imperial house of Castile, united by joyful Victorias, waved over the glorious battle-field before the walls of Tunis.

CHAPTER IV.

Zelinda had escaped from Frederigo's arms in the confusion of the conquerors and conquered, and flew so swiftly through the well-known ground, that, though love and desire added wings to his feet, she was soon out of sight. This kindled the fury of the enchanted Spaniard so much the more against the infidel foe. Wherever they collected their scattered force to withstand the progress of the Christians, he hastened with the troops, which ranged themselves around him as about a victorious banner; while Heimbert was ever at his side like a faithful shield, often warding off from his friend dangers which were unperceived by the infatuated youth.

They learnt that Barbarossa had fled the day before, and pushed onwards with little opposition through the gates of Tunis.

Frederigo's and Heimbert's troops were always together.

Thick clouds of smoke began to roll through the streets, and the soldiers had frequently to shake off the sparks and burning fragments which fell upon their coats and richly plumed helmets. "Suppose the enemy has set fire to the powder-magazine

in despair!" exclaimed the thoughtful Heimbert. And Frederigo, to whom a word or sign was sufficient, hastened to the spot from whence the smoke proceeded. Their troops pressed closely after them.

A sudden turn in the street brought them upon a magnificent palace, out of whose beautifully ornamented windows the flames were already bursting. Their fitful splendor seemed to make them like death-torches, prepared to do honor to the costly building in the hour of its ruin, as they illuminated first one part and then another of the massy edifice, and then sunk down again into fearful darkness of smoke and vapor.

And like a faultless statue, the crowning glory of the whole, Zelinda stood upon a giddy projection, wreathed around with gleaming tongues of flame, calling upon the faithful to assist her in securing from destruction the wisdom of many centuries, which was laid up in this building. The pinnacle tottered with the effects of the fire beneath, and a few stones gave way. Frederigo anxiously cried to the endangered lady; and hardly had she withdrawn her lovely foot, when the whole came crashing down on the pavement. Zelinda disappeared within the burning palace, and Frederigo rushed up the marble steps; Heimbert, his ever-faithful friend, immediately following.

Their swift feet led them into a vast saloon, where they saw high arches over their heads, and a labyrinth of chambers opening one into another around

them. The walls were all ranged with splendid shelves, in which were stored rolls of parchment, papyrus, and palm-leaf, inscribed with the long-forgotten characters of past ages, which had now reached the end of their designs; for the flames were creeping in destruction among them, and stretched their serpent-like heads from one repository of learning to another; while the Spanish soldiers, who had hoped for plunder, were enraged at finding this mighty building filled only with these parchments, and the more so, because they discerned in them nothing but what appeared to them magical characters.

Frederigo flew, as in a dream, through the strange halls, now half consumed, ever calling Zelinda; not thinking or caring for any thing but his enchanting beauty. Long did Heimbert remain at his side, till they reached a cedar staircase which led to a higher story, where Frederigo listened a moment, and then said: "She is speaking there aloud! she needs my help!" and sprung up the glowing steps. Heimbert hesitated an instant, for he saw them giving way, and thought to warn his companion; but at that moment they broke down, and left nothing but a fiery path. Still he could see that Frederigo had clung to an iron grating, over which he soon swung himself. The way was inaccessible to Heimbert: quickly recollecting himself, he lost no time in idly gazing, but hastily sought another flight of stairs in

the neighboring halls, which would conduct him to his friend.

Meanwhile Frederigo, following the enchanting voice, had reached a gallery, in the midst of which was a fearful abyss of flames, while the pillars on each side were yet standing. He soon perceived the lovely figure of Zelinda, who clung to a pillar with one hand, while with the other she threatened some Spanish soldiers, who seemed every moment about to seize her, and already had her delicate foot advanced to the edge of the glowing gulf. It was impossible for Frederigo to join her, for the breadth of the separating flames was far too great to spring across. Trembling lest his voice should make the maiden, through either terror or anger, precipitate herself into the abyss, he spoke quite softly over the fiery grave: "Ah, Zelinda! have no such frightful thoughts; your preserver is here!" The maiden bowed her queenly head. And when Frederigo saw her so calm and composed, he cried with all the thunder of a warrior's voice, "Back! you rash plunderers! whoever advances one step nearer to that lady, shall feel the weight of my anger!" They started, and appeared willing to retire, till one among them said, "The knight can do us no harm — the gulf is a little too broad for that; and as for the lady's throwing herself in, it is evident that the young knight is her lover; and whoever has a lover is not so inclined to throw herself away." At this they laughed, and again advanced. Zelinda neared the

flaming edge; but Frederigo, with the fury of a lion, had torn his target from his arm, and now flung it across with so sure an aim, that the rash leader fell senseless to the ground. The rest again stood still. "Away with you!" cried Frederigo, authoritatively, "or my dagger shall strike the next as surely; nor will I ever rest till I have found you out, and made you feel the force of my vengeance." The dagger gleamed in the youth's hand, and yet more fearfully gleamed the rage in his eyes. The soldiers fled. Then Zelinda bowed courteously to her preserver; and taking a roll of palm-leaves which lay at her feet, she hastily disappeared at a side door of the gallery. In vain did Frederigo seek her in the burning palace.

The great Alva held a council with his officers in an open place in the midst of the conquered city, and, by means of an interpreter, questioned the Moorish prisoners what had become of the beautiful enchantress who had been seen encouraging them on the walls, and who, he said, was the most lovely sorceress the world ever saw. Nothing could be gained from the answers; for though all knew her to be a noble lady, well versed in magic lore, none seemed able to tell from whence she had entered Tunis, or whither she had now fled. At last, when they had begun to think their ignorance was the pretense of obstinacy, an old dervish, who had been hitherto unnoticed, pressed forward, and said, with a scornful smile, "Whoever wishes to seek the lady, the way is open

for him. I will not conceal what I know of her destination; and I *do* know something. Only you must first promise me I shall not be compelled to guide any one to her, or my lips shall remain closed forever; and you may do what you will with me." He looked like one who would keep his word; and Alva, who was pleased with the man's resolute spirit (so akin to his own), gave him the desired assurance. The dervish began his relation.

He was once, he said, wandering in the endless desert of Sahara — perhaps from empty curiosity, and perhaps for a better reason. He lost his way; and at last, when wearied to death, he reached one of those fruit-bearing islands which they call an oasis. Now followed a description of the things he saw there, clothed in all the warmth of oriental imagery; so that the hearts of his hearers sometimes melted within them, and sometimes their hair stood on end at the horrors he related; though, from the strange pronunciation of the speaker, and from his hurried way of speaking, they could hardly understand half he said. The end of all was, that Zelinda dwelt upon this blooming island, surrounded on all sides by the pathless desert, and protected by magic terrors. On her way thither, as the old dervish very well knew, she had left the city half an hour before. The contemptuous words with which he closed his speech showed plainly that he desired nothing more than that some Christian would undertake the journey, which would inevitably lead him to destruction.

At the same time he solemnly affirmed he had uttered nothing but undoubted truth, as a man would do who knows that things are just as he related them. Thoughtful and astonished were the circle of officers around him.

Heimbert had just joined the party, after seeking his friend in the burning palace, and collecting and arranging their troops in such a manner as to prevent the possibility of any surprise from the robber-hordes. He now advanced before Alva, and humbly bowed.

"What wilt thou, my young hero?" said Alva, greeting the young captain in the most friendly manner. "I know your smiling, blooming countenance well. The last time I saw you, you stood like a protecting angel over me. I am so sure that you can make no request but what is knightly and honorable, that I grant it, whatever it may be."

"My gracious general," said Heimbert, whose cheeks glowed at this praise, "if I may venture to ask a favor, it is, that you will give me permission to follow the lady Zelinda in the way this strange dervish has pointed out."

The great general bowed assentingly, and added: "To a more noble knight could not this honorable adventure be consigned."

"I do not know that," said an angry voice in the crowd; "but this I do know, that to me, above all other men, this adventure belongs, as a reward for the capture of Tunis. For who was the first on the height and in the city?"

"That was Don Frederigo Mendez," said Heimbert, taking the speaker by the hand, and leading him before Alva. "In his favor I will willingly resign my reward; for he has done the emperor and the army better service than I have."

"Neither of you shall lose his reward," said Alva. "Each has now permission to seek the maiden in whatever way he thinks best."

Swift as lightning the two young captains escaped from the circle on opposite sides.

CHAPTER V.

Like a vast trackless sea, without one object to break the dreary monotony of its horizon, ever white and ever desolate, the great desert of Sahara stretches itself before the eyes of the unhappy wanderer who has lost himself in this frightful region. And, in another way, it resembles the ocean. It throws up waves; and often a burning mist is seen on its surface. Not, indeed, the gentle play of the waves which unite all the coasts of the earth; where each wave, as it rolls onward, brings you a message of love from the far island-kingdoms, and carries your answer with it in a love-flowing dance. These waves are only the wild toying of the hot wind with the faithless dust, which always falls back again upon its joyless plain, and never reaches the solid land, where happy men dwell. It is not the lovely cool sea-breeze in which the friendly fays sport themselves, and form their blooming gardens and stately grottoes: it is the suffocating vapor rebelliously given back to the glowing sun by the unfruitful sands.

Hither the two captains arrived at the same time, and stood struck with astonishment at the pathless

chaos before them. Traces of Zelinda, which were not easily hidden, had hitherto compelled them to travel almost always together, however displeased Frederigo might be, and whatever angry glances he cast upon his unwelcome companion. Each had hoped to overtake Zelinda before she reached the desert, well knowing how almost impossible it would be to find her, if she had once entered it. And now they had failed in this, and could obtain no further information from the few Arabs they met, than that there existed a tradition that any one who would travel in a southerly direction, guiding his course by the stars, would, the sages maintained, arrive at a wonderfully blooming oasis, the dwelling of a heavenly beautiful enchantress. But all this appeared to the speakers to be highly uncertain and mysterious.

The young men looked troubled; and their horses snorted and started back at the treacherous sand, while even the riders were uneasy and perplexed. Then they sprang from their saddles suddenly, as at some word of command; and taking the bridles from their horses, and slackening the girths, they turned them loose on the plain, to find their way back to the habitation of man. They took some provision from their saddle-bags, placed it on their shoulders, and, casting from their feet their heavy riding-boots, they plunged, like two courageous swimmers, into the endless waste.

With no other guide than the sun by day, and by night the host of stars, the two captains soon lost

sight of one another; for Frederigo had avoided the object of his displeasure; while Heimbert, thinking of nothing but the end of his journey, and firmly relying upon God's protection, pursued his course in a due southerly direction.

The night had many times succeeded the day, when, one evening, Heimbert was quite alone on the endless desert, without one fixed object for his eye to rest upon; the light flask he carried was empty; and the evening brought with it, instead of the desired coolness, only suffocating columns of sand; so that the exhausted wanderer was obliged to press his burning face to the scorching plain to escape the death-bringing cloud. Sometimes he thought he heard footsteps near him, and the sound of a wide mantle rustling over him; but when he raised himself with anxious haste, he only saw what he had already too often seen in the daytime — the wild beasts of the wilderness roaming about the desert in undisturbed freedom. Now it was a frightful camel, then a long-necked ungainly giraffe, or a great ostrich with its wings outspread. They all appeared to scoff at him; and he resolved to open his eyes no more, but rather perish, without allowing these hateful and strange creatures to disturb his soul in the hour of death.

Soon he heard the sound of horse's hoofs and neighing, and saw a shadow on the sand, and heard a man's voice close to him. Half unwilling, he yet could not resist raising himself wearily; when he saw a rider in an Arab's dress on a slender Arabian horse.

Overcome with joy at the sight of a human being, he exclaimed: "Welcome, O man, in this frightful waste! and succor, if thou canst, thy fellow-man, who must otherwise perish with thirst." And then remembering that the tones of his dear German mother-tongue were not intelligible in this joyless land, he repeated these words in that common language, the *lingua Romana*, which is universally used by Mohammedans and Christians in this part of the world.

The Arab was silent some time, and looked with scorn upon his strange discovery. At last he replied in the same language: "I was in Barbarossa's fight, sir knight, as well as you; and if our overthrow affected me bitterly, I now find no little satisfaction at seeing one of our conquerors lying so pitifully before me."

"Pitifully!" angrily repeated Heimbert; and his wounded feelings of honor for the moment giving him back all his strength, he seized his sword, and stood in battle order.

"Oh, oh!" laughed the Arab; "is the Christian viper so strong? Then it only remains for me to put spurs to my good steed, and leave thee to perish here, thou lost, creeping worm."

"Ride where thou list, dog of a heathen!" retorted Heimbert. "Before I accept a crumb from thee, I *will* perish, unless the dear God sends me manna in this wilderness."

The Arab spurred his fleet horse, and galloped

two hundred paces, laughing long and loud. He stopped, however, and trotting back to Heimbert, said: "Thou art rather too good a knight to leave to die of hunger and thirst. Have a care, now: my good sabre shall reach thee."

Heimbert, who had again stretched himself in hopeless despair on the burning sand, was quickly roused by these words to his feet, sword in hand; and as the Arab's horse flew past him, with a sudden spring the stout German avoided the blow, and parried the cut which the rider aimed at him with his Turkish cimeter.

Repeatedly did the Arab make similar attacks, vainly hoping to give his antagonist the death-blow. At last, overcome by impatience, he came so near, that Heimbert was able to seize him by the girdle and tear him from the fast-galloping horse. With this violent exertion, Heimbert also fell to the ground, but he lay above his adversary; and holding a dagger he had pulled from his girdle before his face, he said: "Wilt thou have mercy or death?"

The Arab closed his eyes before the murderous steel, and answered: "Have pity on me, thou brave warrior! I surrender to thee."

Heimbert commanded him to throw away the sabre he still held in his right hand. He did so; and both combatants rose from the ground, to sink again immediately upon the sand; for the conqueror felt himself far weaker than the conquered.

The Arab's good horse had returned to his master,

as is the custom of those noble animals, who never forsake even a fallen lord, and now stood behind them, stretching his long slender neck over them with a friendly look.

"Arab," said Heimbert, with exhausted voice, "take from thy horse what provision thou hast, and place it before me."

The subdued Arab did humbly what was commanded him, now submitting to the will of his conqueror, as he had before treated him with revengeful anger.

After taking some draughts of palm-wine from the skin, Heimbert looked at the youth with new eyes. He partook of some fruits, drank again of the wine, and said, "Have you much further to ride this night, young man?"

"Yes, indeed," answered the Arab, sorrowfully. "Upon a very distant oasis dwells my aged father and my blooming bride. Now, even if you leave me my freedom, I must perish in this waste desert before I can reach my lovely home."

"Is that the oasis," asked Heimbert, "on which the powerful magic lady, Zelinda, dwells?"

"Allah forbid!" exclaimed the Arab, clasping his hands together. "Zelinda's wondrous island receives none but magicians, and lies far to the scorching south; while our friendly home stretches towards the cooler west."

"I only asked the question to see if we could be companions by the way," said Heimbert, kindly.

"As that cannot be, we must divide everything; for I would not have so good a soldier perish with hunger and thirst."

Saying this, the young captain began to divide the fruits and wine into two portions, placing the greater at his left hand, the smaller at his right, and desired the Arab to take the former. He listened with astonishment as Heimbert added: "See, good sir, I have either not much further to pursue my journey, or I shall die in this desert; of that I have a strong presentiment. Besides, I cannot carry so much on foot as you can on horseback."

"Knight! victorious knight!" cried the amazed Mussulman, "do you give me my horse?"

"It would be a sin and shame to deprive so noble a rider of such a faithful beast," replied Heimbert, smiling. "Ride on, in God's name! and may you safely reach your destination."

He assisted him to mount; and just as the Arab was thanking him, he suddenly exclaimed, "The magic lady!" and, putting spurs to his horse, flew over the dusty plain swift as the wind; while Heimbert, on looking round, saw close beside him, in the bright moonlight, a shining figure, which he easily recognized to be Zelinda.

CHAPTER VI.

The lady looked fixedly at the young soldier, and appeared thinking how she should address him, while he, with astonishment at suddenly finding her he had so long sought, was equally at a loss for words. At length she said in Spanish, "Thou wonderful enigma, I have been witness to all that has passed between thee and the Arab; and the affair perplexes my head as a whirlwind. Tell me plainly, that I may know whether thou art a madman or an angel."

"I am neither one or other, dear lady," answered Heimbert, with his wonted friendliness. "I am only a poor wanderer, who have been obeying one of the commands of his dear Lord Jesus Christ."

"Sit down," said Zelinda, "and relate to me the history of thy lord, who must be an unheard-of person, if he has such servants as thee. The night is cool and still, and beside me thou hast nothing to fear from the dangers of the waste."

"Lady," replied Heimbert, smiling, "I am not of a fearful disposition, and when I am speaking of my blessed Lord and Redeemer, I know not the least anxiety."

So saying, they both sat down on the now cooled

sand, and began a wondrous conversation, while the clear moon shone upon them like a magic lamp from the high blue heavens. Heimbert's words, full of love, and truth, and simplicity, sank like soft sunbeams into Zelinda's heart, driving away the unholy magic power which ruled her, and wrestling with that for possession of the noble territory of her soul. When the morning dawned, she said, "Thou wouldst not be called an angel, but surely thou art one; for what are the angels but messengers of the most high God?"

"In that sense," returned Heimbert, "I am content to be so called. My hope is, to bear His message at all times; and if He bestows further grace and strength upon me, it will give me pleasure if you become my companion in this pious work."

"That is not impossible," said Zelinda, thoughtfully. "But first come with me to my island, where thou shalt be entertained as beseems such an ambassador, far better than here on the desert sand, with miserable palm-wine, which thou must obtain with difficulty."

"Pardon me," answered Heimbert; "it is difficult to refuse a lady any request, but it is unavoidable on this occasion. In your island, many glorious things are brought together by forbidden arts, and their forms are changed from those the Almighty One created. These might dazzle my senses, and in the end enslave them. If you wish to hear more of those best and purest things which I can relate to you, you

must come out to me on this barren sand. The Arab's dates and palm-wine will suffice for many a day yet."

"You would do much better to come with me," said Zelinda, shaking her head with a dissatisfied smile. "You were surely neither born nor educated for a hermit, and there is nothing upon my oasis so very mysterious as you suppose. What is there so strange in birds, and beasts, and flowers, being collected together from different parts of the world, and perhaps a little changed, so that one partakes of the nature of another, as you must have seen in our Arabian pictures? A moving, changing flower, a bird growing on a branch, a fountain emitting fiery sparks, a singing bough — these truly are not such frightful, hateful things?"

"He must avoid temptation, who will not be overcome by it," answered Heimbert, very gravely. "I shall remain in the wilderness: is it your pleasure to visit me here again?"

Zelinda looked down, somewhat displeased; then lowly bending her head, she answered, "Yes; to-morrow evening I will be here." She turned away, and immediately disappeared in the rising storm-blast of the desert.

With the return of evening the lovely lady appeared, and watched the night through in holy converse with the inspired youth, leaving him in the morning humbler, purer, and more pious; and this went on for several days. "Thy palm-wine and

dates must be consumed," said Zelinda one evening; and placed before Heimbert a flask of rich wine and some costly fruits. He, however, softly put the gifts aside, and answered, "Noble lady, I thank you from my heart, but I fear these have been made by your magic arts; or could you assure me that they are not, by Him whom you are beginning to know?" Zelinda's eyes sank in silent confusion, and she took back her gifts. The next evening she brought some similar provisions, and, smiling confidently, gave the desired assurance. Then Heimbert partook of them without scruple; and henceforth the pupil hospitably provided for the sustenance of her teacher in the wilderness.

And now, as the knowledge of the truth sank more deeply in Zelinda's soul, so that she often sat till morning listening to the young man with glowing cheeks, flowing hair, sparkling eyes, and folded hands, he carefully observed to make her understand that it was on account of his friend he had sought her in this dreary region, and that it was Frederigo's love for her which was the means of the highest good to her soul. She well remembered the handsome, fearless young captain who had stormed the height and clasped her in his arms, and related to their friend how he had saved her in the burning library. Heimbert had many pleasant things to say of Frederigo; of his knightly deeds, his serious mind, and of his love to Zelinda, which, since the capture of Tunis, would not be hidden within his

troubled breast, but betrayed itself in a thousand ways, sleeping or waking, to the young German. The godly truth, and the image of her loving hero, entered Zelinda's heart together, and both took root there. Heimbert's presence, and the almost adoring admiration with which his pupil regarded him, did not disturb this state of mind; for from the first moment, his appearance had something too pure and heavenly to allow of any thoughts of earthly love.

When Heimbert was alone, he often smiled to himself and said in his own beloved German language, "How delightful it is to be able, consciously, to repay Frederigo the service he did me, unconsciously, with his angelic sister!" Then he would sing such lovely German songs of Clara's beauty and pious grace, as sounded strangely pleasant in the wilderness, and beguiled his long and lonely hours.

As once Zelinda came in the evening light, her steps airy and graceful, and carrying a basket of food for Heimbert on her lovely head, he smiled and shook his head, saying, "It is quite incomprehensible to me, lovely maiden, why you continue to come to me in this waste. You cannot find pleasure in magic arts, now that the spirit of truth and love dwells within you; and if you changed all things in your oasis into the natural forms which the merciful God gave them, I could go thither with you, and we should have much more time for holy converse."

"Sir knight," answered Zelinda, "you speak truly, and I have thought of doing what you say for many

days, but a strange visitor deprives me of the power. The dervish whom you saw in Tunis, is with me; and because in past days we have performed many magic works together, he thinks to usurp his former authority over me now. He perceives the alteration in me, and on that account is the more importunate."

"We must either expel or convert him," said Heimbert, girding on his sword, and taking up his shield from the ground. "Lead me, dear lady, to your wonderful island."

"You avoided it before," answered the astonished damsel, "and it still remains quite unchanged."

"Formerly it would have been only rashness to venture," returned Heimbert. "You came out to me here, which was better for us both. Now, however, the old serpent might destroy in you the work the Lord has done, and it is therefore a knightly duty to go. In God's name, then, to the work." And they hastened together across the darkening plain to the blooming island.

Magic airs began to play about their heads, and bright stars sparkled from the waving boughs beside their path. Heimbert fixed his eyes on the ground, and said, "Go before me, lovely lady, and guide me at once to the place where I shall find the dervish, for I will see as little of these distracting magic forms as is possible."

Zelinda did as he desired; and so, for the moment, each performed the other's part. The maiden was the guide, while Heimbert followed, with confiding friendliness, in the unknown path.

Branches stooped as if to caress their cheeks wonderful singing-birds grew from the bushes golden and green serpents, with little golden crowns, crept on the velvet-turf, on which Heimbert steadfastly bent his eyes, and brilliant stones gleamed from the moss. When the serpents touched these jewels, they gave forth a silvery sound. The soldier let the serpents creep, and the precious stones sparkle, without caring for anything save to follow hastily the footsteps of his guide.

"We are at the place," said she, with suppressed voice; and looking up, he saw a shining grotto of shells, and perceived within a man asleep, clad in a complete suit of gold scale-armor, of the old Numidian fashion.

"Is that also a phantom, in golden scales?" asked Heimbert, smiling.

"Oh, no," answered Zelinda, very gravely, "it is the dervish himself; and I see, from his having clothed himself in that coat of mail, which has been made invulnerable by being dipped in dragon's blood, that he has, by his magic, made himself aware of our intentions."

"What does that signify?" said Heimbert; "he must know them at last." And he began to call with cheerful voice, "Awake, old man! awake! here is an acquaintance of yours, to whom you must speak."

As the dervish opened his great rolling eyes, all the wondrous things in this magic region began to

move: the water to dance, the branches to strike one another in wild confusion, and, at the same time, the jewels, and corals, and shells gave forth strange perplexing melodies.

"Roll and turn, thunder and play, as you will," cried Heimbert, looking steadfastly around him, "you shall not turn me from my good purpose; and to overpower all this tumult, God has given me a strong far-sounding soldier's voice." Then he turned to the dervish, saying, "It appears, old man, that you already know what has passed between Zelinda and me. If you do not know the whole matter, I will tell you, in a few words, that already she is as good as a Christian, and the bride of a noble Spanish knight. For your own sake, do not put any hindrance in the way; but it would be far better for you, if you would also become a Christian. Talk to me of this, and command all these deviltries to cease; for see, dear sir, our religion speaks of such divine and heavenly things, that one must lay aside all rough and violent passions."

But the dervish, whose hatred glowed towards all Christians, hardly waited to hear the knight's last words before he pressed upon him with drawn cimeter. Heimbert put aside his thrust, saying, "Take care of yourself, sir: I have heard that your weapons are charmed; but that avails nought before my good sword, which has been consecrated in holy places." The dervish recoiled from the sword wildly, but as wildly sprang to the other side of his adversary,

who only caught the deadly cuts, with his target. Like a golden scaly dragon, the Mohammedan swung himself round Heimbert, with a ferocity which, with his long flowing white beard, had something ghastly and horrible in it. Heimbert was prepared to oppose him on all sides, only watching carefully for some opening in the scales made by his violent movements. At last it happened as he expected: he saw, between the breast and arm, the dark garments of the dervish, and there the German made his deadly thrust. The old man cried, "Allah! Allah!" and fell, fearful even in his fall, senseless to the ground.

"Yet I pity him," sighed Heimbert, leaning on his sword, and looking down on his fallen foe; "he fought nobly, and in his death he called upon his Allah, whom he believes to be the true God. We must give him honorable burial." He dug a grave with the broad cimeter of his adversary, laid the corpse in it, covering it with turf, and knelt in silent, heartfelt prayer for the soul of the departed.

CHAPTER VII.

When Heimbert rose from his pious duty, his first glance fell on the smiling Zelinda, who stood by his side; the second, upon the completely changed scene around. Grottoes and caverns had vanished, and with them also the half-terrible, half-charming caricatures of trees and beasts; a gentle hillock of the softest green sloped on each side from the point where he stood to the sandy plain. Several little springs of water murmured in refreshing beauty, and date-trees overhung the pleasant spot, all now smiling with simple sweet peace in the beams of the rising sun.

"Lady," said Heimbert to his companion, "you can now feel how immeasurably greater and more beautiful is all that the dear Father of us all has created than any work of man's highest art. To assist Him in His gracious works has the Heavenly Gardener, in His abundant mercy, granted to us, His beloved children, that we may become thereby better and happier; but we should be especially careful not to walk in our own rash, willful ways: this it is which drives us a second time from Paradise."

"It shall not happen again," said Zelinda, humbly

kneeling before the youth. "Wouldst thou dare, in this desolate region, where we can meet with no priest of our faith, to bestow upon me, who am now changed, without farther delay, the blessing of Holy Baptism?"

Heimbert answered, after a thoughtful pause, "I hope I may do this: if I am wrong, God will pardon what is surely done in zeal to bring to Him so worthy a soul as soon as possible."

They walked, side by side, to one of the springs of the oasis, silently praying, and their souls filled with peaceful hope. By the time they had reached it, and addressed themselves to the holy work, the sun had risen in glory, as if to confirm and strengthen them in their purpose; so that their beaming countenances looked joyful and confiding to one another. Heimbert had not thought of what Christian name he would bestow upon his neophyte; but as he sprinkled the water over her, and saw the desert-sea, so solemn in the glow of morning, he remembered the pious hermit Antonius in his Egyptian waste, and baptized the lovely convert — Antonia.

They passed the day in holy conversation, and Antonia showed her friend a little cave where she used to keep her provisions, when she first dwelt on this oasis. "For," said she, "the good God is my witness that my motive for coming hither was to become better acquainted with Him and His works in solitude, without the least thought of learning magic arts. Then came the dervish tempting me; and he

drew, by his horrible power, the evil spirits of the desert into a league against me, and they allured me to make all the things they showed me either in dreams or awake."

Heimbert had no scruple to take with him from this store whatever of wine and dried fruits would be useful for their journey. Antonia assured him that the way, which was very well known to her, would lead them in a few days to the fruitful shore of this waterless ocean. With the approach of evening coolness they began their wanderings.

The travellers had almost traversed this pathless plain, when one day, they saw a wandering figure at a very great distance; for in the boundless Sahara every object is visible an immense way off, if the whirlwind of the desert raises no sandy columns to intercept the view. This unfortunate man seemed uncertain which way to direct his steps, sometimes taking one direction, and then changing to the opposite one. Antonia's oriental falcon eyes could discover that it was no Arab, but a man in knightly garb.

"O dear sister," said Heimbert, with eager joy, "it must be poor Frederigo seeking thee! For God's sake, let us hasten, lest he lose us, and perhaps his own life also, in this immeasurable waste."

They strove with all their power to reach him, but owing to the burning sun (for it was now midday), Antonia could not long support these hasty steps; and soon the fearful storm-blast raised the cloud of

sand, which completely obscured the object of their search.

With the rising moon they renewed their pursuit, calling loudly upon Frederigo, and making signal-flags of their white handkerchiefs tied to their walking-staffs; but all in vain. The object which had disappeared remained invisible. Only a few giraffes sprang timidly before them, and the ostriches crossed their path with winged speed.

At last, when morning dawned, Antonia stopped, and said, "Thou canst not leave me alone, brother, in this wilderness, and I cannot go one step further. God will protect the noble Frederigo; for how can a father forsake so excellent a child?"

"The pupil shames the tutor," returned Heimbert, his sorrowful face brightening into a smile. "We have done our parts, and may confidently leave the rest to God, hoping He will assist our helplessness." He spread his mantle on the sand, that Antonia might rest more comfortably; but suddenly looked up, exclaiming, "O God! there is a man quite buried in the sand! Oh that he may not be already dead!"

Immediately he began to sprinkle wine from their little flask upon his forehead, and to chafe his temples with it. At length he slowly opened his eyes and said, "Oh that the morning-dew had not again fallen on me, then I should have perished unknown and unlamented in this desert, as it must happen at last!" With these words he closed his

eyes again, like one drunken with sleep; but Heimbert unceasingly continued his endeavors to restore him, and after some time the wearied wanderer half raised himself on the sand.

He looked from Heimbert to his companion, and again at Heimbert, and suddenly exclaimed, gnashing his teeth with rage, "It is even so: I shall not perish in the dim obscurity of forgetfulness; I have lived to see the success of my rival, and my sister's shame!" He sprang eagerly to his feet, and rushed on Heimbert with drawn sword. The German moved neither sword nor arm, but answered, with a friendly voice, "So exhausted as thou art, I cannot possibly take advantage of thee; besides, I must first place this lady in security."

Antonia, who had looked at first with much emotion on the angry knight, now stepped between the two, and said, "O Frederigo, neither misery nor anger can entirely disfigure thee; but in what has my noble brother offended thee?"

"*Brother!*" repeated Frederigo, with astonishment.

"Or godfather, or confessor," said Heimbert: "call me which you please; only call this lady no longer Zelinda; her name is Antonia; she is a Christian, and thy bride!"

Frederigo stood lost in astonishment; but Heimbert's true-hearted words and Antonia's lovely blushes interpreted the enigma for him. He sank before the long-cherished image of his lady; and

here, in this inhospitable desert, there bloomed to heaven a flower of love, gratitude, and faith.

The excitement of this overpowering happiness at last gave way to bodily fatigue. Antonia reposed her delicate limbs on the now scorching sand, like a drooping flower, and slept under the protection of her lover and chosen brother.

"Sleep thou also," said Heimbert softly to Frederigo; "thou must have wandered far, for weariness is stamped upon thine eyelids, while I am quite fresh, and will watch beside thee."

"Ah, Heimbert," sighed the noble Castilian, "my sister is thine, thou messenger of Heaven, — that is an understood thing; but for our unfinished quarrel" —

"Certainly," interrupted Heimbert, very gravely, "thou must satisfy me for every hasty word when we are again in Spain. But, till then, I beg thou wilt never mention it, for it is no fit topic of conversation."

Frederigo sorrowfully reposed on the sand, overpowered by long-resisted sleep; and Heimbert knelt to thank God for so many gracious blessings already bestowed, and for placing so joyful a future before him.

The next day the three travellers reached the border of the desert, and refreshed themselves with a week's rest at a little village hard by; which, with its shadowing trees and soft green pastures, seemed like a little Paradise compared to the joyless Sahara.

Frederigo's condition made this rest particularly necessary; for he had not once left the desert, and was often compelled to fight with the wandering Arabs for his subsistence, and sometimes he had suffered the total want of food and drink. At length he became so perplexed, that the stars no longer sufficed to guide him, and he was driven about, sorrowful and aimless, like the whirlwind of the desert.

Even now, when he fell asleep after the noonday meal, and Antonia and Heimbert watched his slumbers like two smiling angels, he would suddenly awake in terror, and look round him with horror, till, reassured by their friendly faces, he sunk back again to rest. In answer to the questions they put to him when he was fully awake, he said that, in his wanderings, nothing had been more horrible to him than the deceitful dreams which sometimes carried him to his own home, sometimes into the merry camp of his comrades, and sometimes even into Zelinda's neighborhood, and doubled, by contrast, the helpless misery of the frightful desert. This it was which always gave to the moment of waking something fearful, and even in sleep he retained a dim consciousness of past sufferings.

"You cannot think," added he, "what it was to be suddenly banished from the well-known scenes to the endless waste, where, instead of the long-desired, enchanting countenance of my beloved, I only saw the long neck of a hateful camel curiously stretched over me, and with yet more hateful timidity springing away as I rose."

This, together with other effects of his misfortunes, soon passed away from Frederigo's mind, and they continued their journey to Tunis. Yet the remembrance of his conduct to Heimbert, and its unavoidable consequences, spread like a cloud over the noble Spaniard's brow, and softened the natural sternness of his character, so that Antonia could cling more closely to him with her loving heart.

Tunis, which had been the scene of Zelinda's magic power, and of her zeal against the Christians, now witnessed her solemn baptism in a newly consecrated edifice; and immediately afterwards the three companions embarked with favorable winds for Malaga.

CHAPTER VIII.

BESIDE the fountain where she had parted from Heimbert, Doña Clara sat one evening in deep thought. The guitar on her arm gave forth a few solitary chords, which her delicate hand dreamily enticed from it; and at last they formed themselves into a melody, while the following words were murmured from her half-opened lips: —

"Say who, by Tunis' walls afar,
Where with grim bands of Paynim might
The Spaniard and the German fight,—
From lilies dark with gory dew,
And roses of death's pallid hue,
Say, who hath won the prize of war?

"Of Alva ask the tale of fame,
And he two knights of pride will name:
One was my brother, tried and brave;
One, he to whom my heart I gave:
And fain I hoped, in joyous light,
To weave their garlands doubly bright.

"But sadly o'er my eyes and brow
A widow's veil falls doubly now;
The knights are gone, and ne'er again
Shall they be found 'mid living men."

The guitar was silent and soft dew-drops fell from

her heavenly eyes. Heimbert, who was hidden behind the neighboring orange-tree, felt sympathetic tears roll down his cheeks; and Frederigo, who had led him and Antonia in by the garden-way, would no longer keep the cup of joy from the restored ones, but disclosed himself, with a dear form on either arm, as a messenger from Heaven to his sister.

But such moments of high, overpowering delight, like the most precious and long-expected heavenly blessings, are better imagined than described. It is only doing an ill service to recount what this one said, and that one did. Picture it then to thyself, dear reader, after thine own fancy, if the two pairs in my story have become dear to thee, and thou art now intimate with them. If this be not the case, my words would be lost upon thee. For those, then, who with hearty pleasure have dwelt on the reunion of sister and lover, I will proceed with increased satisfaction.

When Heimbert, casting a significant look at Frederigo, wished to retire, after having placed Antonia in Doña Clara's protection, the noble Spaniard would not permit him. He detained his companion with the most courteous and brotherly kindness, entreating him to remain till the evening banquet, at which many distinguished persons of the family of Mendez were present. In their presence Frederigo declared that the brave Heimbert of Waldhausen was Doña Clara's bridegroom: at the same time calling them to witness the sealing it with the

most solemn words, in order that whatever might afterwards happen, which should seem inimical to their contract, it might yet remain indissoluble. The spectators were somewhat astonished at these strange precautionary measures, though no one opposed Frederigo's desire, but unhesitatingly gave him their word that they would carry out his wishes. Their ready compliance was greatly caused by Duke Alva's having, during his late sojourn in Malaga, filled the whole city with his praises of the two heroic young captains.

When the generous wines were circulating round the table, Frederigo stepped behind Heimbert's chair, and whispered, "If it please you, señor, the moon is now risen and shining bright as day: I am ready to meet you." Heimbert bowed assentingly, and the youths left the hall, followed by the sweet salutations of their unsuspecting brides.

As they passed through the blooming gardens, Frederigo said, "Ah! how happily we might have walked together here, had it not been for my rashness!"

"Yes, truly," answered Heimbert; "but as it has happened, and cannot now be otherwise, we will proceed, and only look upon one another as soldiers and noblemen."

"Even so," replied Frederigo; and they hastened on to the farthest part of the gardens, where the sound of their clashing arms might not reach the high banqueting hall.

Silent and inclosed amid dark groves was the chosen spot. No sounds could be heard there from the joyous company, no noise from the populous streets of the city. Only high in heaven the full moon shone down with bright beams upon the solemn circle. It was the right place. Both captains drew their shining blades, and stood opposite to one another, ready for the combat; but before they began, a kindlier feeling drew them to each other; they lowered their weapons, and embraced in the most brotherly manner, then they tore themselves away, and the fearful fight began.

They were now no more brothers in arms — no more friends — no more brothers-in-law, who raised the sharp swords against each other. With firm boldness, but with cool collectedness, they fell upon one another, whilst each guarded his own breast at the same time. After a few hot deadly passes, the combatants were compelled to rest, and they regarded one another with increased love; each rejoicing to find his dear comrade so stout and courageous. Then the fierce strife began anew.

Heimbert dashed aside Frederigo's sword with his left hand as it was thrust at his side, but the keen edge had penetrated through his leathern glove, and the rosy blood gushed out.

"Halt!" cried Frederigo; and they searched for the wound; but finding it of no importance, they bound it up, and with undiminished ardor renewed the fight. It was not long before Heimbert's sword

pierced Frederigo's shoulder, and the German, conscious that it had done so, cried, in his turn, "Halt!" At first Frederigo would not acknowledge that there was a wound; but when the blood streamed forth, he accepted his friend's assistance. This wound also seeming of no consequence, and the noble Spaniard finding himself strong enough in arm and hand to wield the sword, they pursued the deadly contest.

Then they heard a garden-door open, and the tread as of a horse from the groves. Both combatants stayed their stern work, and turned to the unwelcome visitant. The next moment they saw, through the slender pines, some one approaching whose bearing and dress showed that he was a warrior, mounted on a stately charger; and Frederigo, as master of the house, said to him, "Señor, why you have intruded into a strange garden, we will inquire another time. I shall now only beg of you to retire from it at once, and to leave me your name."

"I shall not retire at present," answered the stranger; "but my name I will gladly tell you. I am the Duke of Alva."

At this moment the moonbeams fell upon his stern, pale face — that dwelling-place of all that was noble, and great, and majestic. The two captains bowed low and sank their arms.

"I surely know you," said Alva, looking at them fixedly with his dark eyes. "Yes, truly, I do know you, you two young heroes of the battle of Tunis.

God be blessed and praised, that I find two such noble warriors alive, whom I had almost given up for lost. But tell me now, what has turned your brave swords against each other? I trust you will not object to lay open before me the cause of this knightly encounter."

They complied with the great duke's behest. Both the youths related their history, from the evening before the embarkation till the present moment; whilst Alva remained motionless before them in deep meditation, looking almost like an equestrian statue.

The captains had already long ended their story, and the duke still remained silent. At last he addressed them in the following manner: —

"May God and His holy word help me, my young knights, as I tell you, with my best wisdom and truth of heart, that I believe this affair of yours to be now perfectly settled. Twice have you fought with one another on account of the irritating words which escaped Don Frederigo's lips: and if indeed the slight wounds which you have hitherto received are not sufficient, still, your having been comrades in the fight at Tunis, and Sir Heimbert of Waldhausen having saved Don Frederigo Mendez's life in the desert, after he had rescued his bride for him in battle, all this gives the knight of Waldhausen the privilege of forgiving an enemy every offense, to whom he has shown himself so well inclined. The old Roman history tells us of two centurions under

the great Julius Cæsar who settled a dispute, and contracted a hearty brotherly friendship, from fighting side by side, and delivering one another out of the midst of the Gallic army. But I affirm that you two have done more for each other; and therefore I declare this affair to be entirely settled and at an end. Sheathe your swords, then, and embrace in my presence."

Obedient to their general's command, the young knights for the present put up their swords; but, anxious lest the slightest shade should fall upon their honor, they yet delayed the reconciling embrace.

The great Alva looked somewhat sternly upon them, and said, "Do you suppose, young knights, that I could desire to save the lives of two soldiers at the expense of their good name? Sooner than that, I would rather see you both struck dead at once. But I see that with such obstinate men, one must proceed to more effective measures." And leaping from his horse, which he bound to a tree, he stepped between the two captains with a drawn sword in his right hand, crying out, "Whoever takes upon him to deny that the quarrel between Sir Heimbert of Waldhausen and Don Frederigo Mendez is nobly and honorably settled, shall have to do with Duke Alva for life or death. And should either of the aforenamed knights object to this, let him declare it. I stand as champion for my own opinion."

The youths bowed to their great umpire, and sank into one another's arms. The duke embraced them with heartfelt affection, which appeared the more charming and refreshing, as any outward demonstration of it was seldom to be seen in this strong-minded man.

Then he led the reconciled ones back to their brides; and when these, after the first joyful surprise at the presence of the much-honored general was over, started back on perceiving drops of blood on the youths' garments, the duke said, laughingly, "Oh! the brides-elect of soldiers must not shrink from such medals of honor."

The Duke Alva took on himself to stand as father to both the happy brides, and to fix the festival of their betrothal for the very next day. From this time forth they all lived in undisturbed concord; and when Sir Heimbert was recalled with his lovely spouse to the bosom of his native Germany, the two families yet continued near each other by letters and constant communications. And in after times the descendants of the lord of Waldhausen boasted their connection with the family of Mendez, while the latter ever preserved the tradition of the brave and magnanimous Heimbert of Waldhausen.

ASLAUGA'S KNIGHT.

ASLAUGA'S KNIGHT.

CHAPTER I.

MANY years ago there lived in the island of Fühnen a noble knight, called Froda, the friend of the Skalds, who was so named because he not only offered free hospitality in his fair castle to every renowned and noble bard, but likewise strove with all his might to discover those ancient songs, and tales, and legends, which, in Runic writings or elsewhere, were still to be found; he had even made some voyages to Iceland in search of them, and had fought many a hard battle with the pirates of those seas,— for he was also a right valiant knight, and he followed his great ancestors not only in their love of song, but also in their bold deeds of arms. Although he was still scarcely beyond the prime of youth, yet all the other nobles in the island willingly submitted themselves to him, whether in council or in war; nay, his renown had even been carried ere now over the sea to the neighboring land of Germany.

One bright autumn evening this honor-loving

knight sat before his castle, as he was often wont to do, that he might look far and wide over land and sea, and that he might invite any travellers who were passing by, as was his custom, to share his noble hospitality. But on this day he saw little of all that he was accustomed to look upon; for on his knees there lay an ancient book with skillfully and richly painted characters, which a learned Icelander had just sent to him across the sea: it was the history of Aslauga, the fair daughter of Sigurd, who at first, concealing her high birth, kept goats among the simple peasants of the land, clothed in mean attire; then, in the golden veil of her flowing hair, won the love of King Ragnar Lodbrog; and at last shone brightly on the Danish throne as his glorious queen, till the day of her death.

To the Knight Froda it seemed as though the gracious Lady Aslauga rose in life and birth before him, so that his calm and steadfast heart, true indeed to ladies' service, but never yet devoted to one particular female image, burst forth in a clear flame of love for the fair daughter of Sigurd. "What matters it," thought he to himself, "that it is more than a hundred years since she disappeared from earth? She sees so clearly into this heart of mine — and what more can a knight desire? wherefore she shall henceforth be my honored love, and shall inspire me in battle and in song." And therewith he sang a lay on his new love, which ran in the following manner: —

" They ride over hill and dale apace
To seek for their love the fairest face ;
They search through city and forest-glade
To find for their love the gentlest maid ;
They climb wherever a path may lead
To seek the wisest dame for their meed.
Ride on, ye knights; but ye never may see
What the light of song has shown to me:
Loveliest, gentlest, and wisest of all,
Bold be the deeds that her name shall recall;
What though she ne'er bless my earthly sight?
Yet death shall reveal her countenance bright.
Fair world, good night! Good day, sweet love!
Who seeks here in faith shall find above."

" Such purpose may come to good," said a hollow voice near the knight; and when he looked round, he saw the form of a poor peasant-woman, so closely wrapped in a gray mantle that he could not discern any part of her countenance. She looked over his shoulder on the book, and said, with a deep sigh, " I know that story well; and it fares no better with me than with the princess of whom it tells." Froda looked at her with astonishment. " Yes, yes," pursued she, with strange becks and nods; " I am the descendant of the mighty Rolf, to whom the fairest castles and forests and fields of this island once belonged: your castle and your domains, Froda, amongst others, were his. We are now cast down to poverty; and because I am not so fair as Aslauga, there is no hope that my possessions will be restored to me; and therefore I am fain to veil my poor face from every eye." It seemed that she shed warm

tears beneath her mantle. At this Froda was greatly moved, and begged her, for God's sake, to let him know how he could help her, for that he was a descendant of the famous northern heroes of the olden time; and perhaps yet something more than they — namely, a good Christian. "I almost think," murmured she from beneath her covering, "that you are that very Froda whom men call the Good, and the friend of the Skalds, and of whose generosity and mildness such wonderful stories are told. If it be so, there may be help for me. You need only give up to me the half of your fields and meadows, and I shall be in a condition to live, in some measure, such a life as befits the descendant of the mighty Rolf." Then Froda looked thoughtfully on the ground; partly because she had asked for so very much; partly, also, because he was considering whether she could really be descended from the powerful Rolf. But the veiled form said, after a pause, "I must have been mistaken, and you are not indeed that renowned, gentle-hearted Froda: for how could he have doubted so long about such a trifle? But I will try the utmost means. See now! for the sake of the fair Aslauga, of whom you have both read and sung — for the sake of the honored daughter of Sigurd, grant my request!" Then Froda started up eagerly, and cried, "Let it be as you have said!" and gave her his knightly hand to confirm his words. But he could not grasp the hand of the peasant-woman, although her dark

form remained close before him. A secret shudder began to run through his limbs, whilst suddenly a light seemed to shine forth from the apparition — a golden — light in which she became wholly wrapped; so that he felt as though Aslauga stood before him in the flowing veil of her golden hair, and smiling graciously on him. Transported and dazzled, he sank on his knees. When he rose up once more, he only saw a cloudy mist of autumn spreading over the meadow, fringed at its edges with lingering evening lights, and then vanishing far over the waves. The knight scarcely knew what had happened to him. He returned to his chamber buried in thought, and sometimes feeling sure that he had beheld Aslauga; sometimes, again, that some goblin had risen before him with deceitful tricks, mocking in spiteful wise the service which he had vowed to his dead mistress. But henceforth, wherever he roved, over valley or forest or heath, or whether he sailed upon the waves of the sea, the like appearances met him. Once he found a lute lying in a wood, and drove a wolf away from it; and when sounds burst from the lute without its being touched, a fair child rose up from it, as, of old, Aslauga herself had done. At another time, he would see goats clambering among the highest cliffs by the sea-shore; and it was a golden form who tended them. Then, again, a bright queen, resplendent in a dazzling bark, would seem to glide past him, and salute him graciously; — and if he strove

to approach any of these, he found nothing but cloud, and mist, and vapor. Of all this many a lay might be sung. But so much he learnt from them all, — that the fair Lady Aslauga accepted his service, and that he was now in deed and in truth become her knight.

Meanwhile the winter had come and gone. In northern lands this season never fails to bring to those who understand and love it many an image full of beauty and meaning, with which a child of man might well be satisfied, so far as earthly happiness can satisfy, through all his time on earth. But when the spring came glancing forth with its opening buds and flowing waters, there came also bright and sunny tidings from the land of Germany to Fühnen.

There stood on the rich banks of the Maine, where it pours its waters through the fertile land of Franconia, a castle of almost royal magnificence, whose orphan-mistress was a relation of the German emperor. She was named Hildegardis; and was acknowledged far and wide as the fairest of maidens. Therefore her imperial uncle wished that she should wed none but the bravest knight who could anywhere be met with. Accordingly he followed the example of many a noble lord in such a case, and proclaimed a tournament, at which the chief prize should be the hand of the peerless Hildegardis, unless the victor already bore in his heart a lady wed-

ded or betrothed to him; for the lists were not to be closed to any brave warrior of equal birth, that the contest of strength and courage might be so much the richer in competitors.

Now the renowned Froda had tidings of this from his German brethren in arms; and he prepared himself to appear at the festival. Before all things, he forged for himself a splendid suit of armor; as, indeed, he was the most excellent armorer of the North, far-famed as it is for skill in that art. He worked the helmet out in pure gold, and formed it so that it seemed to be covered with bright flowing locks, which called to mind Aslauga's tresses. He also fashioned on the breastplate of his armor, overlaid with silver, a golden image in half relief, which represented Aslauga in her veil of flowing locks, that he might make known, even at the beginning of the tournament, — "This knight, bearing the image of a lady upon his breast, fights not for the hand of the beautiful Hildegardis, but only for the joy of battle and for knightly fame." Then he took out of his stables a beautiful Danish steed, embarked it carefully on board a vessel, and sailed prosperously to the opposite shore.

CHAPTER II.

In one of those fair beech-woods, which abound in the fertile land of Germany, he fell in with a young and courteous knight of delicate form, who asked the noble Northman to share the meal which he had invitingly spread out upon the greensward, under the shade of the pleasantest boughs. Whilst the two knights sat peacefully together at their repast, they felt drawn towards each other; and rejoiced when, on rising from it, they observed that they were about to follow the same road. They had not come to this good understanding by means of many words; for the young knight Edwald was of a silent nature, and would sit for hours with a quiet smile upon his lips without opening them to speak. But even in that quiet smile there lay a gentle, winning grace; and when, from time to time, a few simple words of deep meaning sprang to his lips, they seemed like a gift deserving of thanks. It was the same with the little songs which he sang ever and anon; they were ended almost as soon as begun: but in each short couplet there dwelt a deep and winning spirit, whether it called forth a kindly sigh or a peaceful smile. It seemed to the noble

Froda as if a younger brother rode beside him, or even a tender, blooming son. They travelled thus many days together; and it appeared as if their path were marked out for them in inseparable union: and much as they rejoiced at this, yet they looked sadly at each other whenever they set out afresh, or where cross-roads met, on finding that neither took a different direction; nay, it seemed at times as if a tear gathered in Edwald's downcast eye.

It happened on a time, that at their hostelry they met an arrogant, overbearing knight, of gigantic stature and powerful frame, whose speech and carriage proved him to be not of German but foreign birth. He appeared to come from the land of Bohemia. He cast a contemptuous smile on Froda, who, as usual, had opened the ancient book of Aslauga's history, and was attentively reading in it. "You must be a ghostly knight?" he said, inquiringly; and it appeared as if a whole train of unseemly jests were ready to follow. But Froda answered so firmly and seriously with a negative, that the Bohemian stopped short suddenly; as when the beasts, after having ventured to mock their king the lion, are subdued to quietness by one glance of his eye. But not so easily was the Bohemian knight subdued; rather the more did he begin to mock young Edwald for his delicate form and for his silence — all which he bore for some time with great patience; but when at last the stranger used an unbecoming phrase, he arose, girded on his

sword, and bowing gracefully, he said, "I thank you, Sir Knight, that you have given me this opportunity of proving that I am neither a slothful nor unpracticed knight; for only thus can your behavior be excused, which otherwise must be deemed most unmannerly. Are you ready?"

With these words he moved towards the door; the Bohemian knight followed, smiling scornfully; while Froda was full of care for his young and slender companion, although his honor was so dear to him that he could in no way interpose.

But it soon appeared how needless were the Northman's fears. With equal vigor and address did Edwald assault his gigantic adversary, so that to look upon, it was almost like one of those combats between a knight and some monster of the forest, of which ancient legends tell. The issue too was not unlike. While the Bohemian was collecting himself for a decisive stroke, Edwald rushed in upon him, and, with the force of a wrestler, cast him to the ground. But he spared his conquered foe, helped him courteously to rise, and then turned to mount his own steed. Soon after he and Froda left the hostelry, and once more their journey led them on the same path as before.

"From henceforth this gives me pleasure," said Froda, pointing with satisfaction to their common road. "I must own to you, Edchen," — he had accustomed himself, in loving confidence, to call his young friend by that childlike name, — "I must own

to you, that hitherto, when I have thought that you might perhaps be journeying with me to the tournament held in honor of the fair Hildegardis, a heaviness came over my heart. Your noble knightly spirit I well knew, but I feared lest the strength of your slender limbs might not be equal to it. Now I have learned to know you as a warrior who may long seek his match; and God be praised if we still hold on in the same path, and welcome our earliest meeting in the lists!"

But Edwald looked at him sorrowfully, and said, "What can my skill and strength avail, if they be tried against you, and for the greatest earthly prize, which one of us alone can win? Alas! I have long foreboded with a heavy heart the sad truth, that you also are journeying to the tournament of the fair Hildegardis."

"Edchen," answered Froda, with a smile, "my gentle, loving youth, see you not that I already wear on my breastplate the image of a liege lady? I strive but for renown in arms, and not for your fair Hildegardis."

"*My* fair Hildegardis!" answered Edwald, with a sigh. "*That* she is not, nor ever will be, — or should she, ah! Froda, it would pierce your heart. I know well the Northland faith is deep-rooted as your rocks, and hard to dissolve as their summits of snow; but let no man think that he can look unscathed into the eyes of Hildegardis. Has not she, the haughty, the too haughty maiden, so bewitched my tranquil, lowly

mind, that I forget the gulf which lies between us, and still pursue her; and would rather perish than renounce the daring hope to win that eagle spirit for my own?"

"I will help you to it, Edchen," answered Froda, smiling still. "Would that I knew how this all-conquering lady looks! She must resemble the Valkyrien of our heathen forefathers, since so many mighty warriors are overcome by her."

Edwald solemnly drew forth a picture from beneath his breastplate, and held it before him. Fixed, and as if enchanted, Froda gazed upon it, with glowing cheeks and sparkling eyes; the smile passed away from his countenance, as the sunlight fades away from the meadows before the coming darkness of the storm.

"See you not now, my noble comrade," whispered Edwald, "that for one of us two, or perhaps for both, the joy of life is gone?"

"Not yet," replied Froda, with a powerful effort; "but hide your magic picture, and let us rest beneath this shade. You must be somewhat spent with your late encounter, and a strange weariness oppresses me with leaden weight." They dismounted from their steeds, and stretched themselves upon the ground.

The noble Froda had no thought of sleep; but he wished to be undisturbed whilst he wrestled strongly with himself and strove, if it might be, to drive from his mind that image of fearful beauty. It

seemed as if this new influence had already become a part of his very life, and at last a restless dreamy sleep did indeed overshadow the exhausted warrior. He fancied himself engaged in combat with many knights, whilst Hildegardis looked on smiling from a richly adorned balcony; and just as he thought he had gained the victory, the bleeding Edwald lay groaning beneath his horse's feet. Then again it seemed as if Hildegardis stood by his side in a church, and they were about to receive the marriage-blessing. He knew well that this was not right, and the "Yes," which he was to utter, he pressed back with resolute effort into his heart, and forthwith his eyes were moistened with burning tears. From yet stranger and more bewildering visions, the voice of Edwald at last awoke him. He raised himself up, and heard his young companion saying courteously, as he looked towards a neighboring thicket, "Only return, noble maiden; I will surely help you, if I can; and I had no wish to scare you away, but that the slumbers of my brother in arms might not be disturbed by you." A golden gleam shone through the branches as it vanished.

"For heaven's sake, my faithful comrade," cried Froda, "to whom are you speaking, and who has been here by me?"

"I cannot myself rightly understand," said Edwald. "Hardly had you dropped asleep, when a figure came forth from the forest, closely wrapped in a

dark mantle. At first I took her for a peasant. She seated herself at your head; and though I could see nothing of her countenance, I could well observe that she was sorely troubled, and even shedding tears. I made signs to her to depart, lest she should disturb your sleep; and would have offered her a piece of gold, supposing that poverty must be the cause of her deep distress. But my hand seemed powerless, and a shudder passed through me, as if I had entertained such a purpose towards a queen. Immediately glittering locks of gold waved here and there between the folds of her close-wrapped mantle, and the thicket began almost to shine in the light which they shed. 'Poor youth,' said she then, 'you love truly, and can well understand how a lofty woman's heart burns in keenest sorrow, when a noble knight, who vowed himself to be her own, withdraws his heart, and, like a weak bondman, is led away to meaner hopes.' Hereupon she arose, and, sighing, disappeared in yonder thicket. It almost seemed to me, Froda, as though she uttered your name."

"Yes, it was me she named," answered Froda; "and not in vain she named me. — Aslauga, thy knight comes, and enters the lists, and all for thee and thy reward alone! — At the same time, my Edchen, we will win for you your haughty bride." With this he sprang upon his steed, full of the proud joy of former times; and when the magic of Hildegar-

dis's beauty, dazzling and bewildering, would rise up before him, he said smiling, "Aslauga!" and the sun of his inner life shone forth again cloudless and serene.

CHAPTER III.

From a balcony of her castle on the Maine, Hildegardis was wont to refresh herself in the cool of the evening by gazing on the rich landscape below, but gazing more eagerly on the glitter of arms, which often came in sight from many a distant road; for knights were approaching singly, or with a train of followers, all eager to prove their courage and their strength in striving for the high prize of the tournament. She was in truth a proud and high-minded maiden, — perhaps more so than became even her dazzling beauty and her princely rank. As she now gazed with a proud smile on the glittering roads, a damsel of her train began the following lay: —

"The joyous song of birds in spring
Upon the wing
Doth echo far through wood and dell,
And freely tell
Their treasures sweet of love and mirth,
Too gladsome for this lowly earth.

"The gentle breath of flowers in May,
O'er meadows gay,
Doth fill the pure and balmy air
With perfume rare;
Still floating round each slender form,
Though scorch'd by sun, or torn by storm.

"But every high and glorious aim,
And the pure flame
That deep abiding in my heart
Can ne'er depart,
Too lofty for my falt'ring tongue,
Must die with me, unknown, unsung."

"Wherefore do you sing that song, and at this moment?" said Hildegardis, striving to appear scornful and proud, though a deep and secret sadness was plainly enough seen to overshadow her countenance. "It came into my head unawares," replied the damsel, "as I looked upon the road by which the gentle Edwald with his pleasant lays first approached us; for it was from him I learnt it. But seems it not to you, my gracious lady, and to you, too, my companions, as if Edwald himself were again riding that way towards the castle?"—"Dreamer!" said Hildegardis scornfully, — and yet could not, for some space, withdraw her eyes from the knight, till at length, with an effort, she turned them on Froda, who rode beside him, saying: "Yes, truly, that knight is Edwald; but what can you find to notice in the meek-spirited, silent boy? Here, fix your eyes, my maidens, on this majestic figure, if you would behold a knight indeed." She was silent. A voice within her, as though of prophecy, said, "Now the victor of the tournament rides into the court-yard;" and she, who had never feared the presence of any human being, now felt humbled, and almost painfully awed, when she beheld the northern knight.

At the evening meal the two newly arrived knights

were placed opposite to the royal Hildegardis. As Froda, after the northern fashion, remained in full armor, the golden image of Aslauga gleamed from his silver breastplate full before the eyes of the haughty lady. She smiled scornfully, as if conscious that it depended on her will to drive that image from the breast and from the heart of the stranger knight. Then suddenly a clear, golden light passed through the hall, so that Hildegardis said, "Oh, the keen lightning!" and covered her eyes with both her hands. But Froda looked into the dazzling radiance with a joyful gaze of welcome. At this Hildegardis feared him yet more, though at the same time she thought, "This loftiest and most mysterious of men must be born for me alone." Yet could she not forbear, almost against her will, to look from time to time in friendly tenderness on the poor Edwald, who sat there silent, and with a sweet smile seemed to pity and to mock his own suffering and his own vain hopes.

When the two knights were alone in their sleeping-chamber, Edwald looked for a long time in silence into the dewy, balmy night. Then he sang to his lute: —

"A hero wise and brave,
A lowly tender youth,
Are wandering through the land
In steadfast love and truth.

"The hero, by his deeds,
Both bliss and fame hath won,

And still, with heartfelt joy,
The faithful child looked on."

But Froda took the lute from his hands, and said, "No, Edchen, I will teach you another song; listen!

"There's a gleam in the hall, and like morning's light
Hath shone upon all her presence bright.
Suitors watch as she passes by —
She may gladden their hearts by one glance of her eye:
But coldly she gazeth upon the throng,
And they that have sought her may seek her long.
She turns her away from the richly clad knight;
She heeds not the words of the learned wight;
The prince is before her in all his pride,
But other the visions around her that glide.
Then tell me, in all the wide world's space,
Who may e'er win that lady's grace?
In sorrowful love there sits apart
The gentle squire who hath her heart;
They all are deceived by fancies vain,
And he knows it not who the prize shall gain."

Edwald thrilled. "As God wills," said he, softly to himself. "But I cannot understand how such a thing could be." — "As God wills," repeated Froda. The two friends embraced each other, and soon after fell into a peaceful slumber.

Some days afterwards, Froda sat in a secluded bower of the castle garden, and was reading in the ancient book of his lovely mistress Aslauga. It happened at that very time that Hildegardis passed by. She stood still, and said, thoughtfully, "Strange union that you are of knight and sage, how comes it that you bring forth so little out of the deep treasures of your knowledge? And yet I think you

must have many a choice history at your command, even such as that which now lies open before you; for I see rich and bright pictures of knights and ladies painted amongst the letters." — "It is, indeed, the most surpassing and enchanting history in all the world," said Froda; "but you have neither patience nor thoughtfulness to listen to our wonderful legends of the North."

"Why think you so?" answered Hildegardis, with that pride which she rejoiced to display towards Froda, when she could find courage to do so; and, placing herself on a stone seat opposite, she commanded him at once to read something to her out of that fair book.

Froda began; and in the very effort which he made to change the old heroic speech of Iceland into the German tongue, his heart and mind were stirred more fervently and solemnly. As he looked up from time to time, he beheld the countenance of Hildegardis beaming in ever-growing beauty with joy, wonder, and interest; and the thought passed through his mind whether this could indeed be his destined bride, to whom Aslauga herself was guiding him.

Then suddenly the characters became strangely confused; it seemed as if the pictures began to move, so that he was obliged to stop. While he fixed his eyes with a strong effort upon the book, endeavoring to drive away this strange confusion, he heard a well-known, sweetly solemn voice, which

said, "Leave a little space for me, fair lady. The history which that knight is reading to you relates to me; and I hear it gladly."

Before the eyes of Froda, as he raised them from his book, sat Aslauga in all the glory of her flowing golden locks beside Hildegardis, on the seat. With tears of affright in her eyes, the maiden sank back and fainted. Solemnly, yet graciously, Aslauga warned her knight with a motion of her fair right hand, and vanished.

"What have I done to you," said Hildegardis, when recovered from her swoon by his care, — "what have I done to you, evil-minded knight, that you call up your northern spectres before me, and well-nigh destroy me through terror of your magic arts?" "Lady," answered Froda, "may God help me, as I have not called hither the wondrous lady who but now appeared to us. But now her will is known to me, and I commend you to God's keeping."

With that he walked thoughtfully out of the bower. Hildegardis fled in terror from the gloomy shade; and, rushing out on the opposite side, reached a fair open grass-plot, where Edwald, in the soft glow of twilight, was gathering flowers; and, meeting her with a courteous smile, offered her a nosegay of narcissus and pansies.

CHAPTER IV.

At length the day fixed for the tournament arrived; and a distinguished noble, appointed by the German emperor, arranged all things in the most magnificent and sumptuous guise for the solemn festival. The field-combat opened wide, and fair, and level; thickly strewn with the finest sand, so that both man and horse might find sure footing; and, like a pure field of snow, it shone forth from the midst of the flowery plain. Rich hangings of silk from Arabia, curiously embroidered with Indian gold, adorned with their various colors the lists inclosing the space, and hung from the lofty galleries which had been erected for the ladies and the nobles who were to behold the combat. At the upper end, under a canopy of majestic arches richly wrought in gold, was the place of the Lady Hildegardis. Green wreaths and garlands waved gracefully between the glittering pillars in the soft breezes of July. And with impatient eyes the multitude, who crowded beyond the lists, gazed upwards, expecting the appearance of the fairest maiden of Germany; and were only at times drawn to another part by the stately approach of the combatants. Oh, how many a bright suit of armor, how many a silken, richly embroidered

mantle, how many a lofty waving plume was here to be seen! The splendid troop of knights moved within the lists, greeting and conversing with each other, as a bed of flowers stirred by a breath of wind: — but the flower-stems had grown to lofty trees, the yellow and white flower-leaves had changed to gold and silver, and the dew-drops to pearls and diamonds. For whatever was most fair and costly, most varied and full of meaning, had these noble knights collected in honor of this day. Many an eye was turned on Froda, who, without scarf, plume, or mantle, with his shining silver breastplate, on which appeared the golden image of Aslauga, and with his well-wrought helmet of golden locks, shone, in the midst of the crowd, like polished brass. Others, again, there were, who took pleasure in looking at the young Edwald; his whole armor was covered by a mantle of white silk, embroidered in azure and silver, as his whole helmet was concealed by a waving plume of white feathers. He was arrayed with almost feminine elegance; and yet the conscious power with which he controlled his fiery, snow-white steed made known the victorious strength and manliness of the warlike stripling.

In strange contrast appeared the tall and almost gigantic figure of a knight clothed in a mantle of black glossy bear-skin, bordered with costly fur, but without any ornament of shining metal. His very helmet was covered with dark bear-skin; and, instead of plumes, a mass of blood-red horse-hair

hung like a flowing mane profusely on every side. Well did Froda and Edwald remember that dark knight; for he was the uncourteous guest of the hostelry: he also seemed to remark the two knights; for he turned his unruly steed suddenly round, forced his way through the crowd of warriors, and, after he had spoken over the inclosure to a hideous, bronze-colored woman, sprang with a wild leap across the lists, and, with the speed of an arrow, vanished out of sight. The old woman looked after him with a friendly nod. The assembled people laughed as at a strange masking device; but Edwald and Froda had their own almost shuddering thoughts concerning it, which, however, neither imparted to the other.

The kettle-drums rolled, the trumpets sounded, and, led by the aged duke, Hildegardis advanced, richly appareled, but more dazzling through the brightness of her own beauty. She stepped forward beneath the arches of the golden bower, and bowed to the assembly. The knights bent low, and the feeling rushed into many a heart, "There is no man on earth who can deserve a bride so queenly." When Froda bowed his head, it seemed to him as if the golden radiance of Aslauga's tresses floated before his sight; and his spirit rose in joy and pride that his lady held him worthy to be so often reminded of her.

And now the tournament began. At first the knights strove with blunted swords and battle-axes; then they ran their course with lances man to man;

but at last they divided into two equal parties, and a general assault began, in which every one was allowed to use at his own will either sword or lance. Froda and Edwald equally surpassed their antagonists, as (measuring each his own strength and that of his friend) they had foreseen. And now it must be decided, by a single combat with lances, to whom the highest prize of victory should belong. Before this trial began, they rode slowly together into the middle of the course, and consulted where each should take his place. "Keep you your guiding-star still before your sight," said Froda, with a smile; "the like gracious help will not be wanting to me." Edwald looked round astonished for the lady of whom his friend seemed to speak; but Froda went on. "I have done wrong in hiding aught from you; but after the tournament you shall know all. Now lay aside all needless thoughts of wonder, dear Edchen, and sit firm in your saddle; for I warn you that I shall run this course with all my might: not my honor alone is at stake, but the far higher honor of my lady."

"So also do I purpose to demean myself," said Edwald, with a friendly smile. They shook each other by the hand, and rode to their places.

Amidst the sound of trumpets they met again, running their course with lightning speed; the lances shivered with a crash, the horses staggered, the knights, firm in their saddles, pulled them up, and rode back to their places. But as they prepared

for another course, Edwald's white steed snorted in wild affright, and Froda's powerful chestnut reared up foaming.

It was plain that the two noble animals shrunk from a second hard encounter ; but their riders held them fast with spur and bit, and, firm and obedient, they again dashed forward at the second call of the trumpet. Edwald, who by one deep, ardent gaze on the beauty of his mistress had stamped it afresh on his soul, cried aloud at the moment of encounter, " Hildegardis ! " and so mightily did his lance strike his valiant adversary, that Froda sank backwards on his steed, with difficulty keeping his seat in his saddle, or holding firm in his stirrups ; whilst Edwald flew by unshaken, lowered his spear to salute Hildegardis as he passed her bower, and then, amidst the loud applause of the multitude, rushed to his place, ready for the third course. And, ah ! Hildegardis herself, overcome by surprise, had greeted him with a blush and a look of kindness ; it seemed to him as if the overwhelming joy of victory were already gained. But it was not so ; for the valiant Froda, burning with noble shame, had again tamed his affrighted steed, and, chastising him sharply with the spur for his share in this mischance, said in a low voice, " Beautiful and beloved lady, show thyself to me, — the honor of thy name is at stake." To every other eye it seemed as if a golden, rosy tinted summer's cloud was passing over the deep-blue sky ; but Froda beheld the heavenly countenance of his lady, felt the

waving of her golden tresses, and cried, "Aslauga!" The two rushed together, and Edwald was hurled from his saddle far upon the dusty plain.

Froda remained for a time motionless, according to the laws of chivalry, as though waiting to see whether any one would dispute his victory, and appearing on his mailed steed like some lofty statue of brass. All around stood the multitude in silent wonderment. When at length they burst forth into shouts of triumph, he beckoned earnestly with his hand, and all were again silent. He then sprang lightly from his saddle, and hastened to the spot where the fallen Edwald was striving to rise. He pressed him closely to his breast, led his snow-white steed towards him, and would not be denied holding the stirrups of the youth whilst he mounted. Then he bestrode his own steed, and rode by Edwald's side towards the golden bower of Hildegardis, where with lowered spear and open visor, he thus spoke: "Fairest of all living ladies, I bring you here Edwald, your knightly bridegroom, before whose lance and sword all the knights of this tournament have fallen away, I only excepted, who can make no claim to the choicest prize of victory, since I, as the image on my breastplate may show, already serve another mistress."

The duke was even now advancing towards the two warriors, to lead them into the golden bower; but Hildegardis restrained him with a look of displeasure, saying immediately, while her cheeks

glowed with anger, "Then you seem, Sir Froda, the Danish knight, to serve your lady ill; for even now you openly styled me the fairest of living ladies."

"That did I," answered Froda, bending courteously; "because my fair mistress belongs to the dead."

A slight shudder passed at these words through the assembly, and through the heart of Hildegardis; but soon the anger of the maiden blazed forth again, and the more because the most wonderful and excellent knight she knew had scorned her for the sake of a dead mistress.

"I make known to all," she said with solemn earnestness, "that according to the just decree of my imperial uncle, this hand can never belong to a vanquished knight, however noble and honorable he may otherwise have proved himself. As the conqueror of this tournament, therefore, is bound to another service, this combat concerns me not; and I depart hence as I came, a free and unbetrothed maiden."

The duke seemed about to reply; but she turned haughtily away, and left the bower. Suddenly, a gust of wind shook the green wreaths and garlands, and they fell untwined and rustling behind her. In this the people, displeased with the pride of Hildegardis, thought they beheld an omen of punishment, and with jeering words noticed it as they departed.

CHAPTER V.

The two knights had returned to their apartments in deep silence. When they arrived there, Edwald caused himself to be disarmed, and laid every piece of his fair, shining armor together with a kind of tender care, almost as if he were burying the corpse of a beloved friend. Then he beckoned to his squires to leave the chamber, took his lute on his arm, and sang the following song to its notes: —

"Bury them, bury them out of sight,
For hope and fame are fled;
And peaceful resting and quiet night
Are all now left for the dead."

"You will stir up my anger against your lute," said Froda. "You had accustomed it to more joyful songs than this. It is too good for a passing-bell, and you too good to toll it. I tell you yet, my young hero, all will end gloriously."

Edwald looked awhile with wonder in his face, and he answered kindly: "Beloved Froda, if it displeases you, I will surely sing no more." But, at the same time, he struck a few sad chords, which sounded infinitely sweet and tender. Then the northern knight, much moved, clasped him in his arms, and

said: "Dear Edchen, sing and say and do whatever pleases you; it shall ever rejoice me. But you may well believe me, for I speak not this without a spirit of presage — your sorrow shall change; whether to death or life I know not, but great and overpowering joy awaits you." Edwald rose firmly and cheerfully from his seat, seized his companion's arm with a strong grasp, and walked forth with him through the blooming alleys of the garden into the balmy air.

At that very hour, an aged woman, muffled in many a covering, was led secretly to the apartment of the Lady Hildegardis. The appearance of the dark complexioned stranger was mysterious; and she had gathered round her for some time, by many feats of jugglery, a part of the multitude returning home from the tournament, but had dispersed them at last in wild affright. Before this happened, the tire-woman of Hildegardis had hastened to her mistress, to entertain her with an account of the rare and pleasant feats of the bronze-colored woman. The maidens in attendance, seeing their lady deeply moved, and wishing to banish her melancholy, bade the tire-woman bring the old stranger hither. Hildegardis forbade it not, hoping that she should thus divert the attention of her maidens, while she gave herself up more deeply and earnestly to the varying imaginations which flitted through her mind.

The messenger found the place already deserted, and the strange old woman alone in the midst, laughing immoderately. When questioned by her, she

did not deny that she had all at once taken the form of a monstrous owl, announcing to the spectators in a screeching voice, that she was the Devil, — and that every one upon this rushed screaming home.

The tire-woman trembled at the fearful jest, but durst not return to ask again the pleasure of Hildegardis, whose discontented mood she had already remarked. She gave strict charge to the old woman, with many a threat and promise, to demean herself discreetly in the castle; after which she brought her in by the most secret way, that none of those whom she had terrified might see her enter.

The aged crone now stood before Hildegardis, and winked to her, in the midst of her low and humble salutation, in a strangely familiar manner, as though there were some secret between them. The lady felt an involuntary shudder, and could not withdraw her gaze from the features of that hideous countenance, hateful as it was to her. The curiosity which had led the rest to desire a sight of the strange woman was by no means gratified; for she performed none but the most common tricks of jugglery and related only well-known tales, so that the tire-woman felt wearied and indifferent; and, ashamed of having brought the stranger, she stole away unnoticed. Several other maidens followed her example; and as these withdrew, the old crone twisted her mouth into a smile, and repeated the same hideous confidential wink towards the lady. Hildegardis could not understand what attracted her

in the jests and tales of the bronze-colored woman; but so it was, that in her whole life she had never bestowed such attention on the words of any one. Still the old woman went on and on, and already the night looked dark without the windows; but the attendants who still remained with Hildegardis had sunk into a deep sleep, and had lighted none of the wax-tapers in the apartment.

Then, in the dusky gloom, the dark old crone rose from the low seat on which she had been sitting, as if she now felt herself well at ease, advanced towards Hildegardis, who sat as if spell-bound with terror, placed herself beside her on the purple couch, and embracing her in her long dry arms with a hateful caress, whispered a few words in her ear. It seemed to the lady as if she uttered the names of Froda and Edwald; and from them came the sound of a flute, which, clear and silvery as were its tones, seemed to lull her into a trance. She could indeed move her limbs, but only to follow those sounds, which like a silver net-work floated round the hideous form of the old woman. She moved from the chamber, and Hildegardis followed her through all her slumbering maidens, still singing softly as she went, "Ye maidens, ye maidens, I wander by night."

Without the castle, accompanied by squire and groom, stood the gigantic Bohemian warrior; he laid on the shoulders of the crone a bag of gold so heavy that she sank half whimpering, half laughing,

on the ground; then lifted the entranced Hildegardis on his steed, and galloped with her silently into the ever-deepening gloom of night.

"All ye noble lords and knights, who yesterday contended gallantly for the prize of victory and the hand of the peerless Hildegardis, arise, arise! saddle your steeds, and to the rescue! The peerless Hildegardis is carried away!"

Thus proclaimed many a herald through castle and town, in the bright red dawn of the following day; and on all sides rose the dust from the tread of knights and noble squires along those roads by which so lately, in the evening twilight, Hildegardis in proud repose had gazed on her approaching suitors.

Two of them, well known to us, remained inseparably together; but they knew as little as the others whether they had taken the right direction; for how and when the adored lady could have disappeared from her apartments, was still to the whole castle a fearful and mysterious secret.

Edwald and Froda rode as long as the sun moved over their heads, unwearied as he; and now when he sank in the waves of the river, they thought to win the race from him, and still spurred on their jaded steeds. But the noble animals staggered and panted, and the knights were constrained to grant them some little refreshment in a grassy meadow. Secure of bringing them back at their first call, their masters removed both bit and curb,

that they might be refreshed with the green pasture, and with the deep blue waters of the Maine, while they themselves reposed under the shade of a neighboring thicket of alders.

And deep in the cool dark shade, there shone, as it were, a mild but clear, sparkling light, and checked the speech of Froda, who at that moment was beginning to tell his friend the tale of his knightly service to his sovereign lady, which had been delayed hitherto, first by Edwald's sadness, and then by the haste of their journey. Ah, well did Froda know that lovely golden light! "Let us follow it, Edchen," said he in a low tone, "and leave the horses awhile to their pasture." Edwald in silence followed his companion's advice. A secret voice, half sweet, half fearful, seemed to tell him that here was the path, the only right path to Hildegardis. Once only he said in astonishment, "Never before have I seen the evening glow shine on the leaves so brightly." Froda shook his head with a smile, and they pursued in silence their unknown track.

When they came forth on the other side of the alder-thicket upon the bank of the Maine, which almost wound round it, Edwald saw well that another glow than that of evening was shining on them; for dark clouds of night already covered the heavens, and the guiding light stood fixed on the shore of the river. It lit up the waves, so that they could see a high, woody island in the midst of the stream, and a boat on the hither side of the shore fast bound to a

stake. But on approaching, the knights saw much more; — a troop of horsemen of strange and foreign appearance were all asleep, and in the midst of them, slumbering on cushions, a female form in white garments.

"Hildegardis!" murmured Edwald to himself with a smile, and at the same time he drew his sword in readiness for the combat as soon as the robbers should awake, and beckoned to Froda to raise the sleeping lady, and convey her to a place of safety. But at this moment something like an owl passed whizzing over the dark squadron; and they all started up with clattering arms and hideous outcries. A wild, unequal combat arose in the darkness of night, for that beaming light had disappeared. Froda and Edwald were driven asunder, and only at a distance heard each other's mighty war-cry. Hildegardis, startled from her magic sleep, uncertain whether she were waking or dreaming, fled bewildered and weeping bitterly into the deep shades of the alder-thicket.

CHAPTER VI.

Froda felt his arm grow weary, and the warm blood was flowing from two wounds in his shoulder; he wished so to lie down in death that he might rise up with honor from his bloody grave to the exalted lady whom he served. He cast his shield behind him, grasped his sword-hilt with both hands, and rushed wildly, with a loud war-cry, upon the affrighted foe. Instantly he heard some voices cry, "It is the rage of the northern heroes which has come upon him." And the whole troop were scattered in dismay, while the exhausted knight remained wounded and alone in the darkness.

Then the golden hair of Aslauga gleamed once more in the alder-shade; and Froda said, leaning, through weariness, on his sword, "I think not that I am wounded to death; but whenever that time shall come, O beloved lady, wilt thou not indeed appear to me in all thy loveliness and brightness?" A soft "Yes" breathed against his cheek, and the golden light vanished.

But now Hildegardis came forth from the thicket, half fainting with terror, and said feebly, "Within is the fair and frightful spectre of the North; without

is the battle: — O merciful Heaven! whither shall I go?"

Then Froda approached to soothe the affrighted one, to speak some words of comfort to her, and to inquire after Edwald; but wild shouts and the rattling of armor announced the return of the Bohemian warriors. With haste Froda led the maiden to the boat, pushed off from the shore, and rowed her with the last effort of his failing strength towards the island which he had observed in the midst of the stream. But the pursuers had already kindled torches, and waved them sparkling here and there: by this light they soon discovered the boat; they saw that the dreaded Danish knight was bleeding, and gained fresh courage for their pursuit. Hardly had Froda pushed the boat to the shore of the island, before he perceived a Bohemian on the other side in another skiff; and soon afterwards the greater number of the enemy embarked to row towards the island. "To the wood, fair maiden," he whispered, as soon as he had landed Hildegardis on the shore: "there conceal yourself, whilst I endeavor to prevent the landing of the robbers." But Hildegardis, clinging to his arm, whispered again, "Do I not see that you are pale and bleeding? and would you have me expire with terror in the dark and lonely clefts of this rock? Ah! and if your northern gold-haired spectre were to appear again and seat herself beside me! Think you that I do not see her there now, shining through the thicket!"—"She shines!"

echoed Froda; and new strength and hope ran through every vein. He climbed the hill, following the gracious gleam; and Hildegardis, though trembling at the sight, went readily with her companion, saying only, from time to time, in a low voice, "Ah, Sir Knight! — my noble, wondrous knight! — leave me not here alone; that would be my death." The knight, soothing her courteously, stepped ever onwards through the darkness of dell and forest; for already he heard the sound of the Bohemians landing on the shore of the island. Suddenly he stood before a cave thick-covered with underwood; and the gleam disappeared. "Here, then," he whispered, endeavoring to hold the branches asunder. For a moment she paused, and said, "If you should but let the branches close again behind me, and I were to remain alone with spectres in this cave! But, Froda, you will surely follow me — a trembling, hunted child as I am? Will you not?" Without more misgivings she passed through the branches; and the knight, who would willingly have remained without as a guard, followed her. Earnestly he listened through the stillness of night, whilst Hildegardis hardly dared to draw her breath. Then was heard the tramp of an armed man, coming ever nearer and nearer, and now close to the entrance of the cave. In vain did Froda strive to free himself from the trembling maiden. Already the branches before the entrance were cracking and breaking, and Froda sighed deeply. "Must, I then, fall like a

lurking fugitive, entangled in a woman's garments? It is a base death to die. But can I cast this half-fainting creature away from me on the dark hard earth, perhaps into some deep abyss? Come then what will, thou, Lady Aslauga, knowest that I die an honorable death!"

"Froda! Hildegardis!" breathed a gentle, well-known voice at the entrance; and recognizing Edwald, Froda bore the lady towards him into the starlight, saying, "She will die of terror in our sight in this deep cavern. Is the foe near at hand?" "Most of them lie lifeless on the shore, or swim bleeding through the waves," said Edwald. "Set your mind at rest, and repose yourself. Are you wounded, beloved Froda?" He gave this short account to his astonished companions — how, in the darkness, he had mixed with the Bohemians and pressed into the skiff, and that it had been easy to him on landing to disperse the robbers entirely, who supposed that they were attacked by one of their own crew, and thought themselves bewitched. "They began at last to fall on one another," — so he ended his history, — "and we have only now to wait for the morning to conduct the lady home; for those who are wandering about of that owl-squadron will doubtless hide themselves from the eye of day." While speaking, he had skillfully and carefully arranged a couch of twigs and moss for Hildegardis; and when the wearied one, after uttering some gentle words of gratitude, had sunk into a slumber, he

began, as well as the darkness would allow, to bind up the wounds of his friend. During this anxious task, while the dark boughs of the trees murmured over their heads, and the rippling of the stream was heard from afar, Froda, in a low voice, made known to his brother in arms to the service of what lady he was bound. Edwald listened with a deep attention; but at last he said tenderly, "Trust me, the noble Princess Aslauga will not resent it, if you pledge yourself to this earthly beauty in faithful love. Ah! even now, doubtless, you are shining in the dreams of Hildegardis, richly-gifted and happy knight! I will not stand in your way with my vain wishes; I see now clearly that she can never love me. Therefore I will this very day hasten to the war which so many valiant knights of Germany are waging in the heathen land of Prussia; and the black cross, which distinguishes them for warriors of the Church, I will lay as the best balm on my throbbing heart. Take, then, dear Froda, that fair hand which you have won in battle, and live henceforth a life of surpassing happiness and joy."

"Edwald," said Froda, gravely, "this is the first time that I ever heard one word from your lips which a true knight could not fulfill. Do as it pleases you towards the fair and haughty Hildegardis; but Aslauga remains my mistress ever, and no other do I desire in life or death." The youth was startled by these stern words, and made no reply. Both, without saying more to each other, watched through the night in solemn thought.

The next morning, when the rising sun shone brightly over the flowery plains around the Castle of Hildegardis, the watchman on the tower blew a joyful blast from his horn; for his keen eye had distinguished far in the distance his fair lady, who was riding from the forest between her two deliverers; and from castle, town, and hamlet came forth many a rejoicing train to assure themselves with their own eyes of the happy news.

Hildegardis turned to Edwald with eyes sparkling through tears, and said, "Were it not for you, young knight, they might have sought long and vainly before they found the lost maiden or the noble Froda, who would now be lying in that dark cavern a bleeding and lifeless corse." Edwald bowed lowly in reply, but persevered in his wonted silence. It even seemed as though an unusual grief restrained the smile which erewhile answered so readily, in childlike sweetness, to every friendly word.

The noble guardian of Hildegardis had, in the overflowing joy of his heart, prepared a sumptuous banquet, and invited all the knights and ladies present to attend it. Whilst Froda and Edwald, in all the brightness of their glory, were ascending the steps in the train of their rescued lady, Edwald said to his friend, "Noble, steadfast knight, you can never love me more!" And as Froda looked in astonishment, he continued, — "Thus it is when children presume to counsel heroes, however well they may mean it. Now have I offended grievously against

you, and yet more against the noble Lady Aslauga." "Because you would have plucked every flower of your own garden to gladden me with them?" said Froda: "No; you are my gentle brother in arms now, as heretofore, dear Edchen, and are perhaps become yet dearer to me."

Then Edwald smiled again in silent contentment, like a flower after the morning showers of May.

The eyes of Hildegardis glanced mildly and kindly on him, and she often conversed graciously with him, while, on the other hand, since yesterday, a reverential awe seemed to separate her from Froda. But Edwald also was much altered. However he welcomed with modest joy the favor of his lady, it yet seemed as if some barrier were between them which forbade him to entertain the most distant hope of successful love.

It chanced that a noble count, from the court of the Emperor, was announced, who, being bound on an important embassy, had wished to pay his respects to the lady Hildegardis by the way. She received him gladly; and as soon as the first salutations were over, he said, looking at her and at Edwald, "I know not if my good fortune may not have brought me hither to a very joyful festivity. That would be right welcome news to the Emperor my master." Hildegardis and Edwald were lovely to look upon in their blushes and confusion: but the count, perceiving at once that he had been too hasty, inclined himself respectfully towards the young

knight, and said, "Pardon me, noble Duke Edwald, my too great forwardness; but I know the wish of my sovereign, and the hope to find it already fulfilled prompted my tongue to speak." All eyes were fixed inquiringly on the young hero, who answered, in graceful confusion, "It is true; the Emperor, when I was last in his camp, through his undeserved favor, raised me to the rank of a duke. It was my good fortune, that in an encounter, some of the enemy's horse, who had dared to assault the sacred person of the Emperor, dispersed and fled on my approach." The count then, at the request of Hildegardis, related every circumstance of the heroic deed; and it appeared that Edwald had not only rescued the Emperor from the most imminent peril, but also, with the cool and daring skill of a general, had gained the victory which decided the event of the war.

Surprise at first sealed the lips of all; and even before their congratulations could begin, Hildegardis had turned towards Edwald, and said in a low voice, which yet, in that silence, was clearly heard by all, "The noble count has made known the wish of my imperial uncle; and I conceal it no longer, my own heart's wish is the same: I am Duke Edwald's bride." And with that she extended to him her fair right hand; and all present waited only till he should take it, before they burst into a shout of congratulation. But Edwald forbore to do so; he only sunk on one knee before his lady, saying, "God forbid that the lofty Hildegardis should ever recall a

word spoken solemnly to noble knights and dames. 'To no vanquished knight,' you said, 'might the hand of the Emperor's niece belong' — and behold there Froda, the noble Danish knight, my conqueror." Hildegardis, with a slight blush, turned hastily away, hiding her eyes; and as Edwald arose, it seemed as though there were a tear upon his cheek.

In his clanging armor Froda advanced to the middle of the hall, exclaiming, "I declare my late victory over Duke Edwald to have been the chance of fortune, and I challenge the noble knight to meet me again to-morrow in the lists."

At the same time he threw his iron gauntlet ringing on the pavement.

But Edwald moved not to take it up. On the contrary, a glow of lofty anger was on his cheeks, and his eyes sparkled with indignation, so that his friend would hardly have recognized him; and after a silence he spoke: —

"Noble Sir Froda, if I have ever offended you, we are now even. How durst you, a warrior gloriously wounded by two sword-strokes, challenge a man unhurt into the lists to-morrow, if you did not despise him?"

"Forgive me, Duke Edwald,' answered Froda, somewhat abashed, but with cheerfulness; "I have spoken too boldly: not till I am completely cured do I call you to the field."

Then Edwald took up the gauntlet joyfully: he

knelt once more before Hildegardis, who, turning away her face, gave him her fair hand to kiss, and walked, with his arm in that of his noble Danish friend, out of the hall.

CHAPTER VII.

While Froda's wounds were healing, Edwald would sometimes wander, when the shades of evening fell dark and silent around, on the flowery terraces beneath the windows of Hildegardis, and sing pleasant little songs; amongst others the following:

"Heal fast, heal fast, ye hero-wounds;
O knight, be quickly strong;
Beloved strife
For fame and life,
O tarry not too long!"

But that one which the maidens of the castle loved best to learn from him was this; and it was perhaps the longest song that Edwald had ever sung in his whole life: —

"Would I on earth were lying,
By noble hero slain;
So that love's gentle sighing
Breath'd me to life again!

"Would I an emperor were,
Of wealth and power!
Would I were gathering twigs
In woodland bower!

"Would that, in lone seclusion,
I lived a hermit's life!

Would, amid wild confusion,
I led the battle strife!

"O would the lot were mine,
In bower or field,
To which my lady fair
Her smile would yield!"

At this time it happened, that a man, who held himself to be very wise, and who filled the office of secretary to the aged guardian of Hildegardis, came to the two knightly friends to propose a scheme to them. His proposal, in few words, was this, that as Froda could gain no advantage from his victory, he might in the approaching combat suffer himself to be thrown from his steed, and thus secure the lady for his comrade, at the same time fulfilling the wish of the emperor, which might turn to his advantage hereafter in many ways.

At this the two friends at first laughed heartily; but then Froda advanced gravely towards the secretary, and said, "Thou trifler, doubtless the old duke would drive thee from his service did he know of thy folly, and teach thee to talk of the Emperor. Good night, worthy sir; and trust me that when Edwald and I meet each other, it will be with all our heart and strength."

The secretary hastened out of the room with all speed, and was seen next morning to look unusually pale.

Soon after this, Froda recovered from his wounds;

the course was again prepared as before, but crowded by a still greater number of spectators; and in the freshness of a dewy morning the two knights advanced solemnly together to the combat.

"Beloved Edwald," said Froda, in a low voice, as they went, "take good heed to yourself, for neither this time can the victory be yours; on that rose-colored cloud appears Aslauga."

"It may be so," answered Edwald with a quiet smile; "but under the arches of that golden bower shines Hildegardis, and this time she has not been waited for."

The knights took their places; the trumpets sounded; the course began; and Froda's prophecy seemed to be near its fulfillment, for Edwald staggered under the stroke of his lance, so that he let go the bridle, seized the mane with both hands, and thus hardly recovered his seat, whilst his high-mettled snow-white steed bore him wildly around the lists without control. Hildegardis also seemed to shrink at the sight; but the youth at length reined in his steed, and the second course was run.

Froda shot like lightning along the plain, and it seemed as if the success of the young duke were now hopeless; but in the shock of their meeting, the bold Danish steed reared, starting aside as if in fear; the rider staggered, his stroke passed harmless by, and both steed and knight fell clanging to the ground before the steadfast spear of Edwald, and lay motionless upon the field.

Edwald did now as Froda had done before. In knightly wise he stood still awhile upon the spot, as if waiting to see whether any other adversary were there to dispute his victory; then he sprang from his steed, and flew to the assistance of his fallen friend.

He strove with all his might to release him from the weight of his horse; and presently Froda came to himself, rose on his feet, and raised up his charger also. Then he lifted up his vizor, and greeted his conqueror with a friendly smile, though his countenance was pale. The victor bowed humbly, almost timidly, and said, "You, my knight, overthrown — and by me! I understand it not."

"It was her own will," answered Froda, smiling. "Come now to your gentle bride."

The multitude around shouted aloud, each lady and knight bowed low, when the aged duke pointed out to them the lovely pair, and at his bidding, the betrothed, with soft blushes, embraced each other beneath the green garlands of the golden bower.

That very day were they solemnly united in the chapel of the castle, for so had Froda earnestly desired: a journey into a far-distant land, he said, lay before him, and much he wished to celebrate the marriage of his friend before his departure.

CHAPTER VIII.

The torches were burning clear in the vaulted halls of the castle, Hildegardis had just left the arm of her lover to begin a stately dance of ceremony with the aged duke, when Edwald beckoned to his companion, and they went forth together into the moonlit gardens of the castle.

"Ah, Froda, my noble, lofty hero," exclaimed Edwald after a silence, "were you as happy as I am! But your eyes rest gravely and thoughtfully on the ground, or kindle almost impatiently heavenwards. It would be dreadful, indeed, had the secret wish of your heart been to win Hildegardis, and I, foolish boy, so strangely favored, had stood in your way."

"Be at rest Edchen," answered the Danish hero with a smile. "On the word of a knight, my thoughts and yearnings concern not your fair Hildegardis. Far brighter than ever does Aslauga's radiant image shine into my heart: but now hear what I am going to relate to you.

"At the very moment when we met together in the course — oh, had I words to express it to you! — I was enwrapped, encircled, dazzled by Aslauga's golden tresses, which were waving all around me.

Even my noble steed must have beheld the apparition, for I felt him start and rear under me. I saw you no more, — the world no more, — I saw only the angel-face of Aslauga close before me, smiling, blooming like a flower in a sea of sunshine which floated round her. My senses failed me. Not till you raised me from beneath my horse, did my consciousness return, and then I knew, with exceeding joy, that her own gracious pleasure had struck me down. But I felt a strange weariness, far greater than my fall alone could have caused, and I felt assured at the same time that my lady was about to send me on a far-distant mission. I hastened to repose myself in my chamber, and a deep sleep immediately fell upon me. Then came Aslauga in a dream to me, more royally adorned than ever; she placed herself at the head of my couch, and said, 'Haste to array thyself in all the splendor of thy silver armor, for thou art not the wedding-guest alone, thou art also the' —

"And before she could speak the word, my dream had melted away, and I felt a longing desire to fulfill her gracious command, and rejoiced in my heart. But in the midst of the festival, I seemed to myself more lonely than in all my life before, and I cannot cease to ponder what that unspoken word of my lady could be intended to announce."

"You are of a far loftier spirit than I am, Froda," said Edwald after a silence, "and I cannot soar with you into the sphere of your joys. But tell me, has it

never awakened a deep pang within you that you serve a lady so withdrawn from you — alas! a lady who is almost ever invisible?"

"No, Edwald, not so," answered Froda, his eyes sparkling with happiness. "For well I know that she scorns not my service; she has even deigned sometimes to appear to me. Oh, I am in truth a happy knight and minstrel!"

"And yet your silence to-day — your troubled yearnings?"

"Not troubled, dear Edchen; only so heartfelt, so fervent in the depth of my heart, — and so strangely mysterious to myself withal. But this, with all belonging to me, springs alike from the words and commands of Aslauga. How, then, can it be otherwise than something good and fair, and tending to a high and noble aim?"

A squire, who had hastened after them, announced that the knightly bridegroom was expected for the torch-dance; and as they returned, Edwald entreated his friend to take his place in the solemn dance next to him and Hildegardis. Froda inclined his head in token of friendly assent.

The horns and hautboys had already sounded their solemn invitation; Edwald hastened to give his hand to his fair bride; and while he advanced with her to the midst of the stately hall, Froda offered his hand for the torch-dance to a noble lady who stood the nearest to him, without farther observing

her, and took with her the next place to the wedded pair.

But how was it when a light began to beam from his companion, before which the torch in his left hand lost all its brightness? Hardly dared he, in sweet and trembling hope, to raise his eyes to the lady; and when at last he ventured, all his boldest wishes and longings were fulfilled.[1] Adorned with a radiant bridal crown of emeralds, Aslauga moved in solemn loveliness beside him, and beamed on him from amid the sunny light of her golden hair, blessing him with her heavenly countenance. The amazed spectators could not withdraw their eyes from the mysterious pair — the knight in his light silver mail, with the torch raised on high in his hand, earnest and joyful, moving with a measured step, as if engaged in a ceremony of deep and mysterious meaning. His lady beside him, rather floating than dancing, beaming light from her golden hair, so that you would have thought the day was shining into the night; and when a look could reach through all the surrounding splendor to her face, rejoicing heart and sense with the unspeakably sweet smile of her eyes and lips.

Near the end of the dance, she inclined towards Froda and whispered to him with an air of tender confidence, and with the last sound of the horns and hautboys she had disapeared.

[1] See the Baron de la Motte Fouqué's *Waldemar*, —

> "Let none henceforward shrink from daring dreams,
> For earnest hearts shall find their dreams fulfilled."

The most curious spectator dared not question Froda about his partner. Hildegardis did not seem to have been conscious of her presence; but shortly before the end of the festival, Edwald approached his friend, and asked in a whisper, "Was it?"

"Yes, dear youth," answered Froda; "your marriage-dance has been honored by the presence of the most exalted beauty which has been ever beheld in any land. Ah! and if I rightly understood her meaning, you will never more see me stand sighing and gazing upon the ground. But hardly dare I hope it. Now good-night, dear Edchen, good-night. As soon as I may, I will tell you all."

CHAPTER IX.

THE light and joyous dreams of morning still played round Edwald's head, when it seemed as though a clear light encompassed him. He remembered Aslauga; but it was Froda, the golden locks of whose helmet shone now with no less sunny brightness than the flowing hair of his lady. "Ah!" thought Edwald, in his dream, "how beautiful has my dear brother in arms become!" And Froda said to him, "I will sing something to you, Edchen; but softly, so that it may not awaken Hildegardis. Listen to me.

"'She glided in, bright as the day,
There where her knight in slumber lay;
And in her lily hand was seen
A band that seemed of the moonlight sheen,
"We are one," she sang, as about his hair
She twin'd it, and over her tresses fair.
Beneath them the world lay dark and drear:
But he felt the touch of her hand so dear,
Uplifting him far above mortals' sight,
While around him were shed her locks of light,
Till a garden fair lay about him spread —
And this was Paradise, angels said.'"

"Never in your life did you sing so sweetly," said the dreaming Edwald.

"That may well be, Edchen," said Froda, with a smile, and vanished.

But Edwald dreamed on and on, and many other visions passed before him, all of a pleasing kind, although he could not recall them, when, in the full light of morning, he unclosed his eyes with a smile. Froda alone, and his mysterious song, stood clear in his memory. He now knew full well that his friend was dead; but the thought gave him no pain, for he felt sure that the pure spirit of that minstrel warrior could only find its proper joy in the gardens of Paradise, and in blissful solace with the lofty spirits of the ancient times. He glided softly from the side of the sleeping Hildegardis to the chamber of the departed. He lay upon his bed of rest, almost as beautiful as he had appeared in the dream, and his golden helmet was entwined with a wondrously shining lock of hair. Then Edwald made a fair and shady grave in consecrated ground, summoned the chaplain of the castle, and with his assistance laid his beloved Froda therein.

He came back just as Hildegardis awoke; she beheld, with wonder and humility, his mien of chastened joy, and asked him whither he had been so early; to which he replied, with a smile, "I have just buried the corpse of my dearly loved Froda, who, this very night, has passed away to his golden-haired mistress." Then he related the whole history of Aslauga's Knight, and lived on in subdued, unruffled happiness, though for some time he was even

more silent and thoughtful than before. He was often found sitting on the grave of his friend, and singing the following song to his lute : —

"Listening to celestial lays,
Bending thy unclouded gaze
On the pure and living light,
Thou art blest, Aslauga's Knight!

"Send us from thy bower on high
Many an angel-melody,
Many a vision soft and bright,
Aslauga's dear and faithful Knight!"

SINTRAM AND HIS COMPANIONS.

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CHAPTER I.

In the high castle of Drontheim many knights sat assembled to hold council for the weal of the realm; and joyously they caroused together till midnight around the huge stone table in the vaulted hall. A rising storm drove the snow wildly against the rattling windows; all the oak doors groaned, the massive locks shook, the castle-clock slowly and heavily struck the hour of one. Then a boy, pale as death, with disordered hair and closed eyes, rushed into the hall, uttering a wild scream of terror. He stopped beside the richly carved seat of the mighty Biorn, clung to the glittering knight with both his hands, and shrieked in a piercing voice, "Knight and father! father and knight! Death and another are closely pursuing me!"

An awful stillness lay like ice on the whole assembly, save that the boy screamed ever the fearful words. But one of Biorn's numerous retainers, an old esquire, known by the name of Rolf the Good, advanced towards the terrified child, took him in

his arms, and half chanted this prayer: — "O Father, help Thy servant! I believe, and yet I cannot believe." The boy, as if in a dream, at once loosened his hold of the knight; and the good Rolf bore him from the hall unresisting, yet still shedding hot tears and murmuring confused sounds.

The lords and knights looked at one another much amazed, until the mighty Biorn said, wildly and fiercely laughing, "Marvel not at that strange boy. He is my only son; and has been thus since he was five years old: he is now twelve. I am therefore accustomed to see him so; though, at the first, I too was disquieted by it. The attack comes upon him only once in the year, and always at this same time. But forgive me for having spent so many words on my poor Sintram, and let us pass on to some worthier subject for our discourse."

Again there was silence for a while; then whisperingly and doubtfully single voices strove to renew their broken-off discourse, but without success. Two of the youngest and most joyous began a roundelay; but the storm howled and raged so wildly without that this too was soon interrupted. And now they all sat silent and motionless in the lofty hall; the lamp flickered sadly under the vaulted roof; the whole party of knights looked like pale, lifeless images dressed up in gigantic armor.

Then arose the chaplain of the castle of Drontheim, the only priest among the knightly throng, and said, "Dear Lord Biorn, our eyes and thoughts

have all been directed to you and your son in a wonderful manner; but so it has been ordered by the providence of God. You perceive that we cannot withdraw them; and you would do well to tell us exactly what you know concerning the fearful state of the boy. Perchance the solemn tale, which I expect from you, might do good to this disturbed assembly."

Biorn cast a look of displeasure on the priest, and answered, "Sir chaplain, you have more share in the history than either you or I could desire. Excuse me, if I am unwilling to trouble these light-hearted warriors with so rueful a tale."

But the chaplain approached nearer to the knight, and said, in a firm yet very mild tone, "Dear lord, hitherto it rested with you alone to relate or not to relate it; but now that you have so strangely hinted at the share which I have had in your son's calamity, I must positively demand that you will repeat word for word how everything came to pass. My honor will have it so, and that will weigh with you as much as with me."

In stern compliance Biorn bowed his haughty head, and began the following narration: "This time seven years I was keeping the Christmas feast with my assembled followers. We have many venerable old customs which have descended to us by inheritance from our great forefathers; as, for instance, that of placing a gilded boar's head on the table, and making thereon knightly vows of daring

and wondrous deeds. Our chaplain here, who used then frequently to visit me, was never a friend to keeping up such traditions of the ancient heathen world. Such men as he were not much in favor in those olden times."

"My excellent predecessors," interrupted the chaplain, "belonged more to God than to the world, and with Him they were in favor. Thus they converted your ancestors; and if I can in like manner be of service to you, even your jeering will not vex me."

With looks yet darker, and a somewhat angry shudder, the knight resumed: "Yes, yes, I know all your promises and threats of an invisible Power, and how they are meant to persuade us to part more readily with whatever of this world's goods we may possess. Once, ah, truly, once I too had such! Strange! — Sometimes it seems to me as though ages had passed over since then, and as if I were alone the survivor, so fearfully is everything changed. But now I bethink me, that the greater part of this noble company knew me in my happiness, and have seen my wife, my lovely Verena."

He pressed his hands on his eyes, and it seemed as though he wept. The storm had ceased; the soft light of the moon shone through the windows, and her beams played on his wild features. Suddenly he started up, so that his heavy armor rattled with a fearful sound, and he cried out in a thundering voice, "Shall I turn monk, as she has become a

nun? No, crafty priest; your webs are too thin to catch flies of my sort."

"I have nothing to do with webs," said the chaplain. "In all openness and sincerity have I put heaven and hell before you during the space of six years; and you gave full consent to the step which the holy Verena took. But what all that has to do with your son's sufferings I know not, and I wait for your narration."

"You may wait long enough," said Biorn, with a sneer. "Sooner shall" —

"Swear not!" said the chaplain in a loud, commanding tone, and his eyes flashed almost fearfully.

"Hurrah!" cried Biorn in wild affright; "hurra! Death and his companion are loose!" and he dashed madly out of the chamber and down the steps. The rough and fearful notes of his horn were heard, summoning his retainers; and presently afterwards the clatter of horses' feet on the frozen court-yard gave token of their departure.

The knights retired, silent and shuddering; while the chaplain remained alone at the huge stone table praying.

asleep. The light of the lamp fell strangely on his very pale face. The chaplain stood gazing at him for some time, and at length said: "Certainly from his birth his features were always sharp and strongly marked, but now they are almost fearfully so for such a child; and yet no one can help having a kindly feeling towards him, whether he will or not."

"Most true, dear sir," answered Rolf. And it was evident how his whole heart rejoiced at any word which betokened affection for his beloved young lord. Thereupon he placed the lamp where its light could not disturb the boy, and seating himself close by the priest, he began to speak in the following terms: "During that Christmas feast of which my lord was talking to you, he and his followers discoursed much concerning the German merchants, and the best means of keeping down the increasing pride and power of the trading towns. At length Biorn laid his impious hand on the golden boar's head, and swore to put to death without mercy every German trader whom fate, in what way soever, might bring alive into his power. The gentle Verena turned pale, and would have interposed but it was too late; the bloody word was uttered. And immediately afterwards, as though the great enemy of souls were determined at once to secure with fresh bonds the vassal thus devoted to him, a warder came into the hall to announce that two citizens of a trading town in Germany, an old man and his son,

had been shipwrecked on this coast, and were now without the gates, asking hospitality of the lord of the castle. The knight could not refrain from shuddering; but he thought himself bound by his rash vow and by that accursed heathenish golden boar. We, his retainers, were commanded to assemble in the castle yard, armed with sharp spears, which were to be hurled at the defenseless strangers at the first signal made to us. For the first, and I trust the last time in my life, I said 'No' to the commands of my lord; and that I said in a loud voice, and with the heartiest determination. The Almighty, who alone knows whom He will accept, and whom He will reject, armed me with resolution and strength. And Biorn might perceive whence the refusal of his faithful old servant arose, and that it was worthy of respect. He said to me, half in anger and half in scorn: 'Go up to my wife's apartments: her attendants are running to and fro; perhaps she is ill. Go up, Rolf the Good, I say to thee, and so women shall be with women.' I thought to myself, 'Jeer on, then;' and I went silently the way that he had pointed out to me. On the stairs there met me two strange and right fearful beings, whom I had never seen before; and I know not how they got into the castle. One of them was a great, tall man, frightfully pallid and thin; the other was a dwarf-like man, with a most hideous countenance and features. Indeed, when I collected my thoughts and looked carefully at him, it appeared to me" —

Low moanings and convulsive movements of the boy here interrupted the narrative. Rolf and the chaplain hastened to his bed-side, and perceived that his countenance wore an expression of fearful agony, and that he was struggling in vain to open his eyes. The priest made the sign of the cross over him, and immediately peace seemed to be restored, and his sleep again became quiet: they both returned softly to their seats.

"You see," said Rolf, "that it will not do to describe more closely those two awful beings. Suffice it to say, that they went down into the court-yard, and that I proceeded to my lady's apartments. I found the gentle Verena almost fainting with terror and overwhelming anxiety, and I hastened to restore her with some of those remedies which I was able to apply by my skill, through God's gift and the healing virtues of herbs and minerals. But scarcely had she recovered her senses, when, with that calm, holy power which, as you know, is hers, she desired me to conduct her down to the court-yard, saying that she must either put a stop to the fearful doings of this night, or herself fall a sacrifice. Our way took us by the little bed of the sleeping Sintram. Alas! hot tears fell from my eyes to see how evenly his gentle breath then came and went, and how sweetly he smiled in his peaceful slumbers."

The old man put his hands to his eyes, and wept bitterly; but soon he resumed his sad story. "As we approached the lowest window of the staircase,

we could hear distinctly the voice of the elder merchant; and on looking out, the light of the torches showed me his noble features, as well as the bright, youthful countenance of his son. 'I take Almighty God to witness,' cried he, 'that I had no evil thought against this house! But surely I must have fallen unawares amongst heathens; it cannot be that I am in a Christian knight's castle; and if you are indeed heathens, then kill us at once. And thou, my beloved son, be patient and of good courage; in heaven we shall learn wherefore it could not be otherwise.' I thought I could see those two fearful ones amidst the throng of retainers. The pale one had a huge curved sword in his hand, the little one held a spear notched in a strange fashion. Verena tore open the window, and cried in silvery tones through the wild night, 'My dearest lord and husband, for the sake of your only child, have pity on those harmless men! Save them from death, and resist the temptation of the evil spirit.' The knight answered in his fierce wrath — but I cannot repeat his words. He staked his child on the desperate cast; he called Death and the Devil to see that he kept his word: but hush! the boy is again moaning. Let me bring the dark tale quickly to a close. Biorn commanded his followers to strike, casting on them those fierce looks which have gained him the title of Biorn of the Fiery Eyes; while at the same time the two frightful strangers bestirred themselves very busily. Then Verena called out, with piercing

anguish, 'Help, O God, my Saviour!' Those two dreadful figures disappeared; and the knight and his retainers, as if seized with blindness, rushed wildly one against the other, but without doing injury to themselves, or yet being able to strike the merchants, who ran so close a risk. They bowed reverently towards Verena, and with calm thanksgivings departed through the castle gates, which at that moment had been burst open by a violent gust of wind, and now gave a free passage to any who would go forth. The lady and I were yet standing bewildered on the stairs, when I fancied I saw the two fearful forms glide close by me, but mist-like and unreal. Verena called to me: 'Rolf, did you see a tall pale man, and a little hideous one with him, pass just now up the staircase?' I flew after them; and found, alas, the poor boy in the same state in which you saw him a few hours ago. Ever since, the attack has come on him regularly at this time, and he is in all respects fearfully changed. The lady of the castle did not fail to discern the avenging hand of Heaven in this calamity; and as the knight, her husband, instead of repenting, ever became more truly Biorn of the Fiery Eyes, she resolved, in the walls of a cloister, by unremitting prayer, to obtain mercy in time and eternity for herself and her unhappy child."

Rolf was silent; and the chaplain, after some thought, said: "I now understand why, six years ago, Biorn confessed his guilt to me in general words,

and consented that his wife should take the veil. Some faint compunction must then have stirred within him, and perhaps may stir him yet. At any rate it was impossible that so tender a flower as Verena could remain longer in so rough keeping. But who is there now to watch over and protect our poor Sintram?"

"The prayer of his mother," answered Rolf. "Reverend sir, when the first dawn of day appears, as it does now, and when the morning breeze whispers through the glancing window, they ever bring to my mind the soft beaming eyes of my lady, and I again seem to hear the sweet tones of her voice. The holy Verena is, next to God, our chief aid."

"And let us add our devout supplications to the Lord," said the chaplain; and he and Rolf knelt in silent and earnest prayer by the bed of the pale sufferer, who began to smile in his dreams.

CHAPTER III.

The rays of the sun shining brightly into the room awoke Sintram, and raising himself up, he looked angrily at the chaplain, and said, "So there is a priest in the castle! And yet that accursed dream continues to torment me even in his very presence. Pretty priest he must be!"

"My child," answered the chaplain in the mildest tones, "I have prayed for thee most fervently, and I shall never cease doing so — but God alone is Almighty."

"You speak very boldly to the son of the knight Biorn," cried Sintram. "'My child!' If those horrible dreams had not been again haunting me, you would make me laugh heartily."

"Young Lord Sintram," said the chaplain, "I am by no means surprised that you do not know me again; for, in truth, neither do I know you again." And his eyes filled with tears as he spoke.

The good Rolf looked sorrowfully in the boy's face, saying, "Ah, my dear young master, you are so much better than you would make people believe. Why do you that? Your memory is so good, that you must surely recollect your kind old friend

the chaplain, who used formerly to be constantly at the castle, and to bring you so many gifts — bright pictures of saints, and beautiful songs?"

"I know all that very well," replied Sintram, thoughtfully. "My sainted mother was alive in those days."

"Our gracious lady is still living, God be praised!" said the good Rolf.

"But she does not live for us, poor sick creatures that we are!" cried Sintram. "And why will you not call her sainted? Surely she knows nothing about my dreams?"

"Yes, she does know of them," said the chaplain; "and she prays to God for you. But take heed, and restrain that wild, haughty temper of yours. It might, indeed, come to pass that she would know nothing about your dreams, and that would be if your soul were separated from your body; and then the holy angels also would cease to know anything of you."

Sintram fell back on his bed as if thunderstruck; and Rolf said, with a gentle sigh, "You should not speak so severely to my poor sick child, reverend sir."

The boy sat up, and with tearful eyes he turned caressingly towards the chaplain: "Let him do as he pleases, you good, tender-hearted Rolf; he knows very well what he is about. Would you reprove him if I were slipping down a snow-cleft, and he caught me up roughly by the hair of my head?"

The priest looked tenderly at him, and would have spoken his holy thoughts, when Sintram suddenly sprang off the bed and asked after his father. As soon as he heard of the knight's departure, he would not remain another hour in the castle; and put aside the fears of the chaplain and the old esquire, lest a rapid journey should injure his hardly restored health, by saying to them, "Believe me, reverend sir, and dear old Rolf, if I were not subject to these hideous dreams, there would not be a bolder youth in the whole world; and even as it is, I am not so far behind the very best. Besides, till another year has passed, my dreams are at an end."

On his somewhat imperious sign, Rolf brought out the horses. The boy threw himself boldly into the saddle, and taking a courteous leave of the chaplain, he dashed along the frozen valley that lay between the snow-clad mountains. He had not ridden far, in company with his old attendant, when he heard a strange, indistinct sound proceeding from a neighboring cleft in the rock; it was partly like the clapper of a small mill, but mingled with that were hollow groans and other tones of distress. Thither they turned their horses, and a wonderful sight showed itself to them.

A tall man, deadly pale, in a pilgrim's garb, was striving, with violent though unsuccessful efforts, to work his way out of the snow and to climb up the mountain; and thereby a quantity of bones, which were hanging loosely all about his garments, rattled

one against the other, and caused the mysterious sound already mentioned. Rolf, much terrified, crossed himself, while the bold Sintram called out to the stranger, "What art thou doing there? Give an account of thy solitary labors."

"I live in death," replied the other one with a fearful grin.

"Whose are those bones on thy clothes?"

"They are relics, young sir."

"Art thou a pilgrim?"

"Restless, quietless, I wander up and down."

"Thou must not perish here in the snow before my eyes."

"That I will not."

"Thou must come up and sit on my horse."

"That I will." And all at once he started up out of the snow with surprising strength and agility, and sat on the horse behind Sintram, clasping him tight in his long arms. The horse, startled by the rattling of the bones, and as if seized with madness, rushed away through the most trackless passes. The boy soon found himself alone with his strange companion; for Rolf, breathless with fear, spurred on his horse in vain, and remained far behind them. From a snowy precipice the horse slid, without falling, into a narrow gorge, somewhat indeed exhausted, yet continuing to snort and foam as before, and still unmastered by the boy. Yet his headlong course being now changed into a rough, irregular trot, Sintram was able to breathe more freely, and to begin

the following discourse with his unknown companion: —

"Draw thy garment closer around thee, thou pale man, so the bones will not rattle, and I shall be able to curb my horse."

"It would be of no avail, boy; it would be of no avail. The bones must rattle."

"Do not clasp me so tight with thy long arms; they are so cold."

"It cannot be helped, boy; it cannot be helped. Be content. For my long, cold arms are not pressing yet on thy heart."

"Do not breathe on me so with thy icy breath. All my strength is departing."

"I must breathe, boy; I must breathe. But do not complain. I am not blowing thee away."

The strange dialogue here came to an end; for to Sintram's surprise he found himself on an open plain, over which the sun was shining brightly, and at no great distance before him he saw his father's castle. While he was thinking whether he might invite the unearthly pilgrim to rest there, this one put an end to his doubts by throwing himself suddenly off the horse, whose wild course was checked by the shock. Raising his forefinger, he said to the boy, "I know old Biorn of the Fiery Eyes well; perhaps but too well. Commend me to him. It will not need to tell him my name; he will recognize me at the description. So saying, the ghastly stranger turned aside into a thick fir-wood, and disappeared rattling amongst the tangled branches.

Slowly and thoughtfully Sintram rode on towards his father's castle, his horse now again quiet and altogether exhausted. He scarcely knew how much he ought to relate of his wonderful journey, and he also felt oppressed with anxiety for the good Rolf, who had remained so far behind. He found himself at the castle gate sooner than he had expected; the drawbridge was lowered, the doors were thrown open; an attendant led the youth into the great hall, where Biorn was sitting all alone at a huge table, with many flagons and glasses before him, and suits of armor ranged on either side of him. It was his daily custom, by way of company, to have the armor of his ancestors, with closed visors, placed all round the table at which he sat. The father and son began conversing as follows: —

"Where is Rolf?"

"I do not know, father; he left me in the mountains."

"I will have Rolf shot, if he cannot take better care than that of my only child."

"Then father, you will have your only child shot at the same time, for without Rolf I cannot live; and if even one single dart is aimed at him, I will be there to receive it, and to shield his true and faithful heart."

"So! — Then Rolf shall not be shot; but he shall be driven from the castle."

"In that case, father, you will see me go away also; and I will give myself up to serve him in forests, in mountains, in caves."

"So! — Well, then, Rolf must remain here."

"That is just what I think, father."

"Were you riding quite alone?"

"No, father; but with a strange pilgrim. He said that he knew you very well — perhaps too well." And thereupon Sintram began to relate and to describe all that had passed with the pale man.

"I know him also very well," said Biorn. "He is half crazed and half wise, as we sometimes are astonished at seeing that people can be. But do thou, my boy, go to rest after thy wild journey. I give you my word that Rolf shall be kindly received if he arrive here; and that if he do not come soon, he shall be sought for in the mountains."

"I trust to your word, father," said Sintram, half humble, half proud; and he did after the command of the grim lord of the castle.

CHAPTER IV.

Towards evening Sintram awoke. He saw the good Rolf sitting at his bedside, and looked up in the old man's kind face with a smile of unusually innocent brightness. But soon again his dark brows were knit, and he asked, "How did my father receive you, Rolf? Did he say a harsh word to you!"

"No, my dear young lord, he did not; indeed he did not speak to me at all. At first he looked very wrathful; but he checked himself, and ordered a servant to bring me food and wine to refresh me, and afterwards to take me to your room."

"He might have kept his word better. But he is my father, and I must not judge him too hardly. I will now go down to the evening meal." So saying, he sprang up and threw on his furred mantle.

But Rolf stopped him, and said, entreatingly: "My dear young master, you would do better to take your meal to-day alone here in your own apartment; for there is a guest with your father, in whose company I should be very sorry to see you. If you will remain here, I will entertain you with pleasant tales and songs."

"There is nothing in the world which I should

like better, dear Rolf," answered Sintram; "but it does not befit me to shun any man. Tell me, whom should I find with my father?"

"Alas!" said the old man, "you have already found him in the mountain. Formerly, when I used to ride about the country with Biorn, we often met with him, but I was forbidden to tell you anything about him; and this is the first time that he has ever come to the castle."

"The crazy pilgrim!" replied Sintram; and he stood awhile in deep thought, as if considering the matter. At last, rousing himself, he said: "Dear old friend, I would most willingly stay here this evening all alone with you and your stories and songs, and all the pilgrims in the world should not entice me from this quiet room. But one thing must be considered. I feel a kind of dread of that pale, tall man; and by such fears no knight's son can ever suffer himself to be overcome. So be not angry, dear Rolf, if I determine to go and look that strange palmer in the face." And he shut the door of the chamber behind him, and with firm and echoing steps proceeded to the hall.

The pilgrim and the knight were sitting opposite to each other at the great table, on which many lights were burning; and it was fearful, amongst all the lifeless armor, to see those two tall, grim men move, and eat, and drink.

As the pilgrim looked up on the boy's entrance, Biorn said: "You know him already; he is my only child, and your fellow-traveller this morning."

The palmer fixed an earnest look on Sintram, and answered, shaking his head, "I know not what you mean."

Then the boy burst forth, impatiently, "It must be confessed that you deal very unfairly by us! You say that you know my father but too much, and now it seems that you know me altogether too little. Look me in the face: who allowed you to ride on his horse, and in return had his good steed driven almost wild? Speak if you can!"

Biorn smiled, shaking his head, but well pleased, as was his wont, with his son's wild behavior; while the pilgrim shuddered as if terrified and overcome by some fearful, irresistible power. At length, with a trembling voice, he said these words: "Yes, yes, my dear young lord, you are surely quite right; you are perfectly right in everything which you may please to assert."

Then the lord of the castle laughed aloud, and said: "Why, thou strange pilgrim, what is become of all thy wonderfully fine speeches and warnings now? Has the boy all at once struck thee dumb and powerless? Beware, thou prophet-messenger, beware!"

But the palmer cast a fearful look on Biorn which seemed to quench the light of his fiery eyes, and said solemnly, in a thundering voice, "Between me and thee, old man, the case stands quite otherwise. We have nothing to reproach each other with. And now suffer me to sing a song to you on the lute."

He stretched out his hand, and took down from the wall a forgotten and half-strung lute, which was hanging there; and, with surprising skill and rapidity, having put it in a state fit for use, he struck some chords, and raised this song to the low melancholy tones of the instrument: —

"The flow'ret was mine own, mine own,
But I have lost its fragrance rare,
And knightly name and freedom fair,
Through sin, through sin alone.

"The flow'ret was thine own, thine own,
Why cast away what thou didst win?
Thou knight no more, but slave of sin,
Thou'rt fearfully alone!"

"Have a care!" shouted he at the close in a pealing voice, as he pulled the strings so mightily that they all broke with a clanging wail, and a cloud of dust rose from the old lute, which spread round him like a mist.

Sintram had been watching him narrowly whilst he was singing, and more and more did he feel convinced that it was impossible that this man and his fellow-traveller of the morning could be one and the same. Nay, the doubt rose to certainty, when the stranger again looked round at him with the same timid, anxious air, and with many excuses and low reverences hung the lute in its old place, and then ran out of the hall as if bewildered with terror, in strange contrast with the proud and stately bearing which he had shown to Biorn.

The eyes of the boy were now directed to his

father, and he saw that he had sunk back senseless in his seat, as if struck by a blow. Sintram's cries called Rolf and other attendants into the hall; and only by great labor did their united efforts awake the lord of the castle. His looks were still wild and disordered; but he allowed himself to be taken to rest, quiet and yielding.

CHAPTER V.

An illness followed this sudden attack; and during the course of it the stout old knight, in the midst of his delirious ravings, did not cease to affirm confidently that he must and should recover. He laughed proudly when his fever-fits came on, and rebuked them for daring to attack him so needlessly. Then he murmured to himself, "That was not the right one yet; there must still be another one out in the cold mountains."

Always at such words Sintram involuntarily shuddered; they seemed to strengthen his notion that he who had ridden with him, and he who had sat at table in the castle, were two quite distinct persons; and he knew not why, but this thought was inexpressibly awful to him.

Biorn recovered, and appeared to have entirely forgotten his adventure with the palmer. He hunted in the mountains; he carried on his usual wild warfare with his neighbors; and Sintram, as he grew up, became his almost constant companion; whereby each year a fearful strength of body and spirit was unfolded in the youth. Every one trembled at the sight of his sharp, pallid features; his dark rolling

eyes; his tall, muscular, and somewhat lean form; and yet no one hated him — not even those whom he distressed or injured in his wildest humors. This might arise in part out of regard to old Rolf, who seldom left him for long, and who always held a softening influence over him; but also many of those who had known the lady Verena while she still lived in the world, affirmed that a faint reflection of her heavenly expression floated over the very unlike features of her son, and that by this their hearts were won.

Once, just at the beginning of spring, Biorn and his son were hunting in the neighborhood of the sea-coast, over a tract of country which did not belong to them; drawn thither less by the love of sport than by the wish of bidding defiance to a chieftain whom they detested, and thus exciting a feud. At that season of the year, when his winter dreams had just passed off, Sintram was always unusually fierce and disposed for warlike adventures. And this day he was enraged at the chieftain for not coming in arms from his castle to hinder their hunting; and he cursed, in the wildest words, his tame patience and love of peace. Just then one of his wild young companions rushed towards him, shouting joyfully: "Be content, my dear young lord! I will wager that all is coming about as we and you wish; for as I was pursuing a wounded deer down to the sea-shore, I saw a sail and a vessel filled with armed men making for the shore. Doubtless your enemy purposes to fall upon you from the coast."

Joyfully and secretly Sintram called all his followers together, being resolved this time to take the combat on himself alone, and then to rejoin his father, and astonish him with the sight of captured foes and other tokens of victory.

The hunters, thoroughly acquainted with every cliff and rock on the coast, hid themselves round the landing-place; and soon the strange vessel hove nearer with swelling sails, till at length it came to anchor, and its crew began to disembark in unsuspicious security. At the head of them appeared a knight of high degree, in blue steel armor richly inlaid with gold. His head was bare, for he carried his costly golden helmet hanging on his left arm. He looked royally around him; and his countenance, which dark brown locks shaded, was pleasant to behold; and a well-trimmed moustache fringed his mouth, from which, as he smiled, gleamed forth two rows of pearl-white teeth.

A feeling came across Sintram that he must already have seen this knight somewhere; and he stood motionless for a few moments. But suddenly he raised his hand, to make the agreed signal of attack. In vain did the good Rolf, who had just succeeded in getting up to him, whisper in his ear that these could not be the foes whom he had taken them for, but that they were unknown, and certainly high and noble strangers.

"Let them be whom they may," replied the wild youth; "they have enticed me here to wait, and they

shall pay the penalty of thus fooling me. Say not another word, if you value your life." And immediately he gave the signal, a thick shower of javelins followed from all sides, and the Norwegian warriors rushed forth with flashing swords. They found their foes as brave, or somewhat braver, than they could have desired. More fell on the side of those who made than of those who received the assault; and the strangers appeared to understand surprisingly the Norwegian manner of fighting. The knight in steel armor had not in his haste put on his helmet; but it seemed as if he in no wise needed such protection, for his good sword afforded him sufficient defense even against the spears and darts which were incessantly hurled at him, as with rapid skill he received them on the shining blade, and dashed them far away, shivered into fragments.

Sintram could not at the first onset penetrate to where this shining hero was standing, as all his followers, eager after such a noble prey, thronged closely round him; but now the way was cleared enough for him to spring towards the brave stranger, shouting a war-cry, and brandishing his sword above his head.

"Gabrielle!" cried the knight, as he dexterously parried the heavy blow which was descending, and with one powerful sword-thrust he laid the youth prostrate on the ground; then placing his knee on Sintram's breast, he drew forth a flashing dagger, and held it before his eyes as he lay astonished. All

at once the men-at-arms stood round like walls. Sintram felt that no hope remained for him. He determined to die as it became a bold warrior; and without giving one sign of emotion, he looked on the fatal weapon with a steady gaze.

As he lay with his eyes cast upwards, he fancied that there appeared suddenly from heaven a wondrously beautiful female form in a bright attire of blue and gold. "Our ancestors told truly of the Valkyrias," murmured he. "Strike, then, thou unknown conqueror."

But with this the knight did not comply, neither was it a Valkyria who had so suddenly appeared, but the beautiful wife of the stranger, who, having advanced to the high edge of the vessel, had thus met the upraised look of Sintram.

"Folko," cried she, in the softest tone, "thou knight without reproach! I know that thou sparest the vanquished."

The knight sprang up, and with courtly grace stretched out his hand to the conquered youth, saying, "Thank the noble Lady of Montfaucon for your life and liberty. But if you are so totally devoid of all goodness as to wish to resume the combat, here am I; let it be yours to begin."

Sintram sank, deeply ashamed, on his knees, and wept; for he had often heard speak of the high renown of the French knight Folko of Montfaucon, who was related to his father's house, and of the grace and beauty of his gentle lady Gabrielle.

CHAPTER VI.

THE Lord of Montfaucon looked with astonishment at his strange foe; and as he gazed on him more and more, recollections arose in his mind of that northern race from whom he was descended, and with whom he had always maintained friendly relations. A golden bear's claw, with which Sintram's cloak was fastened, at length made all clear to him.

"Have you not," said he, "a valiant and far-famed kinsman, called the Sea-king Arinbiorn, who carries on his helmet golden vulture-wings? And is not your father the knight Biorn? For surely the bear's claw on your mantle must be the cognizance of your house."

Sintram assented to all this, in deep and humble shame.

The knight of Montfaucon raised him from the ground, and said gravely, yet gently, "We are, then, of kin the one to the other; but I could never have believed that any one of our noble house would attack a peaceful man without provocation, and that, too, without giving warning."

"Slay me at once," answered Sintram, "if indeed I am worthy to die by so noble hands. I can no longer endure the light of day."

"Because you have been overcome?" asked Montfaucon.

Sintram shook his head.

"Or is it, rather, because you have committed an unknightly action?"

The glow of shame that overspread the youth's countenance said yes to this.

"But you should not on that account wish to die," continued Montfaucon. "You should rather wish to live, that you may prove your repentance, and make your name illustrious by many noble deeds; for you are endowed with a bold spirit and with a strength of limb, and also with the eagle-glance of a chieftain. I should have made you a knight this very hour, if you had borne yourself as bravely in a good cause, as you have just now in a bad. See to it, that I may do it soon. You may yet become a vessel of high honor."

A joyous sound of shawms and silver rebecks interupted his discourse. The lady Gabrielle, bright as the morning, had now come down from the ship, surrounded by her maidens; and instructed in a few words by Folko, who was his late foe, she took the combat as some mere trial of arms, saying, "You must not be cast down, noble youth, because my wedded lord has won the prize; for be it known to you, that in the whole world there is but one knight who can boast of not having been overcome by the Baron of Montfaucon. And who can say," continued she, sportively, "whether even that would have hap-

pened, had he not set himself to win back the magic ring from me, his lady-love, destined to him, as well by the choice of my own heart as by the will of Heaven!"

Folko, smiling, bent his head over the snow-white hand of his lady; and then bade the youth conduct them to his father's castle.

Rolf took upon himself to see to the disembarking of the horses and valuables of the strangers, filled with joy at the thought that an angel in woman's form had appeared to soften his beloved young master, and perhaps even to free him from that early curse.

Sintram sent messengers in all directions to seek for his father, and to announce to him the arrival of his noble guests. They therefore found the old knight in his castle, with everything prepared for their reception. Gabrielle could not enter the vast, dark-looking building without a slight shudder, which was increased when she saw the rolling fiery eyes of its lord; even the pale, dark-haired Sintram seemed to her very fearful; and she sighed to herself, "Oh, what an awful abode have you brought me to visit, my knight! Would that we were once again in my sunny Gascony, or in your knightly Normandy!"

But the grave yet courteous reception, the deep respect paid to her grace and beauty, and to the high fame of Folko, helped to reassure her; and soon her bird-like pleasure in novelties was awakened through the strange significant appearances of this

new world. And besides, it could only be for a passing moment that any womanly fears found a place in her breast when her lord was near at hand, for well did she know what effectual protection that brave baron was ever ready to afford to all those who were dear to him, or committed to his charge.

Soon afterwards Rolf passed through the great hall in which Biorn and his guests were seated, conducting their attendants, who had charge of the baggage, to their rooms. Gabrielle caught sight of her favorite lute, and desired a page to bring it to her, that she might see if the precious instrument had been injured by the sea-voyage. As she bent over it with earnest attention, and her taper fingers ran up and down the strings, a smile, like the dawn of spring, passed over the dark countenances of Biorn and his son; and both said, with an involuntary sigh, "Ah, if you would but play on that lute, and sing to it! It would be but too beautiful!" The lady looked up at them, well pleased, and smiling her assent, she began this song: —

"Songs and flowers are returning,
And radiant skies of May,
Earth her choicest gifts is yielding,
But one is past away.

"The spring that clothes with tend'rest green
Each grove and sunny plain,
Shines not for my forsaken heart, —
Brings not my joys again.

"Warble not so, thou nightingale,
Upon thy blooming spray,

Thy sweetness now will burst my heart,
I cannot bear thy lay.

"For flowers and birds are come again,
And breezes mild of May,
But treasured hopes and golden hours
Are lost to me for aye!"

The two Norwegians sat plunged in melancholy thought; but especially Sintram's eyes began to brighten with a milder expression, his cheeks glowed, every feature softened, till those who looked at him could have fancied they saw a glorified spirit. The good Rolf, who had stood listening to the song, rejoiced thereat from his heart, and devoutly raised his hands in pious gratitude to Heaven. But Gabrielle's astonishment suffered her not to take her eyes from Sintram. At last she said to him, "I should much like to know what has so struck you in that little song. It is merely a simple lay of the spring, full of the images which that sweet season never fails to call up in the minds of my countrymen."

"But is your home really so lovely, so wondrously rich in song?" cried the enraptured Sintram. "Then I am no longer surprised at your heavenly beauty, at the power which you exercise over my hard, wayward heart! For a paradise of song must surely send such angelic messengers through the ruder parts of the world." And so saying, he fell on his knees before the lady in an attitude of deep humility. Folko looked on all the while

with an approving smile, whilst Gabrielle, in much embarrassment, seemed hardly to know how to treat the half-wild, half-tamed young stranger. After some hesitation, however, she held out her fair hand to him, and said as she gently raised him: "Surely one who listens with such delight to music must himself know how to awaken its strains. Take my lute, and let us hear a graceful inspired song."

But Sintram drew back, and would not take the instrument; and he said, "Heaven forbid that my rough untutored hand should touch those delicate strings! For even were I to begin with some soft strains, yet before long the wild spirit which dwells in me would break out, and there would be an end of the form and sound of the beautiful instrument. No, no; suffer me rather to fetch my own huge harp, strung with bears' sinews set in brass, for in truth I do feel myself inspired to play and sing."

Gabrielle murmured a half-frightened assent; and Sintram having quickly brought his harp, began to strike it loudly, and to sing these words with a voice no less powerful: —

"'Sir knight, sir knight, oh! whither away
With thy snow-white sail on the foaming spray?'
Sing heigh, sing ho, for that land of flowers!

"'Too long have I trod upon ice and snow;
I seek the bowers where roses blow.'
Sing heigh, sing ho, for that land of flowers!

"He steer'd on his course by night and day
Till he cast his anchor in Naples Bay.
Sing heigh, sing ho, for that land of flowers!

"There wander'd a lady upon the strand,
Her fair hair bound with a golden band.
Sing heigh, sing ho, for that land of flowers!

"'Hail to thee! hail to thee! lady bright,
Mine own shalt thou be ere morning light.'
Sing heigh, sing ho, for that land of flowers!

"'Not so, sir knight,' the lady replied,
'For you speak to the margrave's chosen bride.'
Sing heigh, sing ho, for that land of flowers!

"'Your lover may come with his shield and spear,
And the victor shall win thee, lady dear!'
Sing heigh, sing ho, for that land of flowers!

"'Nay, seek for another bride, I pray;
Most fair are the maidens of Naples Bay.'
Sing heigh, sing ho, for that land of flowers!

"'No, lady; for thee my heart doth burn,
And the world cannot now my purpose turn.'
Sing heigh, sing ho, for that land of flowers!

"Then came the young margrave, bold and brave;
But low was he laid in a grassy grave.
Sing heigh, sing ho, for that land of flowers!

"And then the fierce Northman joyously cried,
'Now shall I possess lands, castle, and bride!'
Sing heigh, sing ho, for that land of flowers!

Sintram's song was ended, but his eyes glared wildly, and the vibrations of the harp-strings still resounded in a marvelous manner. Biorn's attitude was again erect; he stroked his long beard and rattled his sword, as if in great delight at what he had

just heard. Much shuddered Gabrielle before the wild song and these strange forms, but only till she cast a glance on the Lord of Montfaucon, who sat there smiling in all his hero strength, unmoved, while the rough uproar passed by him like an autumnal storm.

CHAPTER VII.

Some weeks after this, in the twilight of evening, Sintram, very disturbed, came down to the castle-garden. Although the presence of Gabrielle never failed to soothe and calm him, yet if she left the apartment for even a few instants, the fearful wildness of his spirit seemed to return with renewed strength. So even now, after having long and kindly read legends of the olden times to his father Biorn, she had retired to her chamber. The tones of her lute could be distinctly heard in the garden below; but the sounds only drove the bewildered youth more impetuously through the shades of the ancient elms. Stooping suddenly to avoid some overhanging branches, he unexpectedly came upon something against which he had almost struck, and which, at first sight, he took for a small bear standing on its hind legs, with a long and strangely crooked horn on its head. He drew back in surprise and fear. It addressed him in a grating man's voice: "Well, my brave young knight, whence come you? whither go you? wherefore so terrified?" And then first he saw that he had before him a little old man so wrapped up in a rough garment of fur, that scarcely one of his features was visible, and wearing in his cap a strange-looking long feather.

"But whence come *you?* and whither go *you?*" returned the angry Sintram. "For of you such questions should be asked. What have you to do in our domains, you hideous little being?"

"Well, well," sneered the other one, "I am thinking that I am quite big enough as I am — one cannot always be a giant. And as to the rest, why should you find fault that I go here hunting for snails? Surely snails do not belong to the game which your high mightinesses consider that you alone have a right to follow! Now, on the other hand, I know how to prepare from them an excellent high-flavored drink; and I have taken enough for to-day: marvelous fat little beasts, with wise faces like a man's, and long twisted horns on their heads. Would you like to see them? Look here!"

And then he began to unfasten and fumble about his fur garment; but Sintram, filled with disgust and horror, said: "Pshaw! I detest such animals! Be quiet, and tell me at once who and what you yourself are."

"Are you so bent upon knowing my name?" replied the little man. "Let it content you that I am master of all secret knowledge, and well versed in the most intricate depths of ancient history. Ah, my young sir, if you would only hear them! But you are afraid of me."

"Afraid of you!" cried Sintram, with a wild laugh.

"Many a better man than you has been so before

now," muttered the little Master; "but they did not like being told of it any more than you do."

"To prove that you are mistaken," said Sintram, "I will remain here with you till the moon stands high in the heavens. But you must tell me one of your stories the while."

The little man, much pleased, nodded his head; and as they paced together up and down a retired elm-walk, he began discoursing as follows: —

"Many hundred years ago a young knight, called Paris of Troy, lived in that sunny land of the south where are found the sweetest songs, the brightest flowers, and the most beautiful ladies. You know a song that tells of that fair land, do you not, young sir? 'Sing heigh, sing ho, for that land of flowers.'" Sintram bowed his head in assent, and sighed deeply. "Now," resumed the little Master, "it happened that Paris led that kind of life which is not uncommon in those countries, and of which their poets often sing: he would pass whole months together in the garb of a peasant, piping in the woods and mountains, and pasturing his flocks. Here one day three beautiful sorceresses appeared to him, disputing about a golden apple; and from him they sought to know which of them was the most beautiful, since to her the golden fruit was to be awarded. The first knew how to give thrones, and sceptres, and crowns; the second could give wisdom and knowledge; and the third could prepare philters and love-charms which could not fail of securing the affections of

the fairest of women. Each one in turn proffered her choicest gifts to the young shepherd, in order that, tempted by them, he might adjudge the apple to her. But as fair women charmed him more than anything else in the world, he said that the third was the most beautiful — her name was Venus. The two others departed in great displeasure; but Venus bid him put on his knightly armor and his helmet adorned with waving feathers, and then she led him to a famous city called Sparta, where ruled the noble Duke Menelaus. His young Duchess Helen was the loveliest woman on earth, and the sorceress offered her to Paris in return for the golden apple. He was most ready to have her, and wished for nothing better; but he asked how he was to gain possession of her."

"Paris must have been a sorry knight," interrupted Sintram. "Such things are easily settled. The husband is challenged to a single combat, and he that is victorious carries off the wife."

"But Duke Menelaus was the host of the young knight," said the narrator.

"Listen to me, little Master," cried Sintram; "he might have asked the sorceress for some other beautiful woman, and then have mounted his horse, or weighed anchor, and departed."

"Yes, yes; it is very easy to say so," replied the old man. "But if you only knew how bewitchingly lovely this Duchess Helen was, no room was left for change." And then he began a glowing description

of the charms of this wondrously beautiful woman, but likening the image to Gabrielle so closely, feature for feature, that Sintram, tottering, was forced to lean against a tree. The little Master stood opposite to him grinning, and asked, "Well now, could you have advised that poor knight Paris to fly from her?"

"Tell me at once what happened next," stammered Sintram.

"The sorceress acted honorably towards Paris," continued the old man. "She declared to him that if he would carry away the lovely duchess to his own city Troy, he might do so, and thus cause the ruin of his whole house and of his country; but that during ten years he would be able to defend himself in Troy, and rejoice in the sweet love of Helen."

"And he accepted those terms, or he was a fool!" cried the youth.

"To be sure he accepted them," whispered the little Master. "I would have done so in his place! And do you know, young sir, the look of things then was just as they are happening to-day. The newly risen moon, partly veiled by clouds, was shining dimly through the thick branches of the trees in the silence of evening. Leaning against an old tree, as you now are doing, stood the young enamored knight Paris, and at his side the enchantress Venus, but so disguised and transformed, that she did not look much more beautiful than I do. And by the silvery light of the moon, the form of the beautiful, beloved

one was seen sweeping by alone amidst the whispering boughs." He was silent, and like as in the mirror of his deluding words, Gabrielle just then actually herself appeared, musing as she walked alone down the alley of elms.

"Man, — fearful Master, — by what name shall I call you? To what would you drive me?" muttered the trembling Sintram.

"Thou knowest thy father's strong stone castle on the Moon-rocks!" replied the old man. "The castellan and the garrison are true and devoted to thee. It could stand a ten years' siege; and the little gate which leads to the hills is open, as was that of the citadel of Sparta for Paris." And, in fact, the youth saw through a gate, left open he knew not how, the dim, distant mountains glittering in the moonlight. "And if he did not accept, he was a fool," said the little Master, with a grin, echoing Sintram's former words.

At that moment Gabrielle stood close by him. She was within reach of his grasp, had he made the least movement; and a moonbeam, suddenly breaking forth, transfigured, as it were, her heavenly beauty. The youth had already bent forward —

"My Lord and God, I pray,
Turn from his heart away
This world's turmoil;
And call him to Thy light,
Be it through sorrow's night,
Through pain or toil."

These words were sung by old Rolf at that very time, as he lingered on the still margin of the castle fish-pond, where he prayed alone to Heaven, full of foreboding care. They reached Sintram's ear; he stood as if spell-bound, and made the sign of the cross. Immediately the little Master fled away, jumping uncouthly on one leg, through the gates, and shutting them after him with a yell.

Gabrielle shuddered, terrified at the wild noise. Sintram approached her softly, and said, offering his arm to her: "Suffer me to lead you back to the castle. The night in these northern regions is often wild and fearful."

CHAPTER VIII.

They found the two knights drinking wine within. Folko was relating stories in his usual mild and cheerful manner, and Biorn was listening with a moody air, but yet as if, against his will, the dark cloud might pass away before that bright and gentle courtesy. Gabrielle saluted the baron with a smile, and signed to him to continue his discourse, as she took her place near the knight Biorn, full of watchful kindness. Sintram stood by the hearth, abstracted and melancholy; and the embers, as he stirred them, cast a strange glow over his pallid features.

"And of all the German trading towns," continued Montfaucon, "the largest and richest is Hamburg. In Normandy we willingly see their merchants land on our coasts, and those excellent people never fail to prove themselves our friends when we seek their advice and assistance. When I first visited Hamburg, every honor and respect was paid to me. I found its inhabitants engaged in a war with a neighboring count, and immediately I used my sword for them, vigorously and successfully."

"Your sword! your knightly sword!" interrupted Biorn; and the old wonted fire flashed from his eyes. "Against a knight, and for shopkeepers!"

"Sir knight," replied Folko, calmly, "the barons of Montfaucon have ever used their swords as they chose, without the interference of another; and as I have received this good custom, so do I wish to hand it on. If you agree not to this, so speak it freely out. But I forbid every rude word against the men of Hamburg, since I have declared them to be my friends."

Biorn cast down his haughty eyes, and their fire faded away. In a low voice he said, "Proceed, noble baron. You are right, and I am wrong."

Then Folko stretched out his hand to him across the table, and resumed his narration: "Amongst all my beloved Hamburgers the dearest to me are two men of marvelous experience — a father and son. What have they not seen and done in the remotest corners of the earth, and instituted in their native town! Praise be to God, my life cannot be called unfruitful; but, compared with the wise Gotthard Lenz and his stout-hearted son Rudlieb, I look upon myself as an esquire who has perhaps been some few times to tourneys, and, besides that, has never hunted out of his own forests. They have converted, subdued, gladdened dark men whom I know not how to name; and the wealth which they have brought back with them has all been devoted to the common weal, as if fit for no other purpose. On their return from their long and perilous sea-voyages, they hasten to an hospital which has been founded by them, and where they undertake the part of overseers, and of

careful and patient nurses. Then they proceed to select the most fitting spots whereon to erect new towers and fortresses for the defense of their beloved country. Next they repair to the houses where strangers and travellers receive hospitality at their cost; and at last they return to their own abode, to entertain their guests, rich and noble like kings, and simple and unconstrained like shepherds. Many a tale of their wondrous adventures serves to enliven these sumptuous feasts. Amongst others, I remember to have heard my friends relate one at which my hair stood on end. Possibly I may gain some more complete information on the subject from you. It appears that several years ago, just about the time of the Christmas festival, Gotthard and Rudlieb were shipwrecked on the coast of Norway, during a violent winter tempest. They could never exactly ascertain the situation of the rocks on which their vessel stranded; but so much is certain, that very near the sea-shore stood a huge castle, to which the father and son betook themselves, seeking for that assistance and shelter which Christian people are ever willing to afford each other in case of need. They went alone, leaving their followers to watch the injured ship. The castle gates were thrown open, and they thought all was well. But on a sudden the court-yard was filled with armed men, who with one accord, aimed their sharp, iron-pointed spears at the defenseless strangers; whose dignified remonstrances and mild entreaties were only heard

in sullen silence or with scornful jeerings. After a while a knight came down the stairs, with fire-flashing eyes. They hardly knew whether to think they saw a spectre, or a wild heathen; he gave a signal, and the fatal spears closed around them. At that instant the soft tones of a woman's voice fell on their ear, calling on the Saviour's holy name for aid; at the sound, the spectres in the court-yard rushed madly one against the other, the gates burst open, and Gotthard and Rudlieb fled away, catching a glimpse as they went of an angelic woman who appeared at one of the windows of the castle. They made every exertion to get their ship again afloat, choosing to trust themselves to the sea rather than to that barbarous coast; and at last, after manifold dangers, they landed at Denmark. They say that some heathen must have owned the cruel castle; but I hold it to be some ruined fortress, deserted by men, in which hellish spectres were wont to hold their nightly meetings. What heathen could be found so demon-like as to offer death to shipwrecked strangers, instead of refreshment and shelter?"

Biorn gazed fixedly on the ground, as though he were turned into stone, but Sintram came towards the table, and said, "Father, let us seek out this godless abode, and lay it level with the dust. I cannot tell how, but somehow I feel quite sure that the accursed deed of which we have just heard is alone the cause of my frightful dreams."

Enraged at his son, Biorn rose up, and would per-

haps again have uttered some dreadful words; but Heaven decreed otherwise, for just at that moment the pealing notes of a trumpet were heard, which drowned the angry tones of his voice, the great doors opened slowly, and a herald entered the hall. He bowed reverently, and then said, "I am sent by Jarl Eric the Aged. He returned two days ago from his expedition to the Grecian seas. His wish had been to take vengeance on the island which is called Chios, where fifty years ago his father was slain by the soldiers of the emperor. But your kinsman, the sea-king Arinbiorn, who was lying there at anchor, tried to pacify him. To this Jarl Eric would not listen; so the sea-king said next that he would never suffer Chios to be laid waste, because it was an island where the lays of an old Greek bard, called Homer, were excellently sung, and where, moreover, a very choice wine was made. Words proving of no avail, a combat ensued; in which Arinbiorn had so much the advantage that Jarl Eric lost two of his ships, and only with difficulty escaped in one which had already sustained great damage. Eric the Aged has now resolved to take revenge on some of the sea-king's race, since Arinbiorn himself is seldom on the spot. Will you, Biorn of the Fiery Eyes, at once pay as large a penalty in cattle, and money, and goods, as it may please the Jarl to demand? Or will you prepare to meet him with an armed force at Niflung's Heath seven days hence?"

Biorn bowed his head quietly, and replied in a

mild tone, "Seven days hence at Niflung's Heath." He then offered to the herald a golden goblet full of rich wine, and added, "Drink that, and then carry off with thee the cup which thou hast emptied."

"The Baron of Montfaucon likewise sends greeting to thy chieftain, Jarl Eric," interposed Folko; "and engages to be also at Niflung's Heath, as the hereditary friend of the sea-king, and also as the kinsman and guest of Biorn of the Fiery Eyes."

The herald was seen to tremble at the name of Montfaucon; he bowed very low, cast an anxious, reverential look at the baron, and left the hall.

Gabrielle looked on her knight, smiling lovingly and securely, for she well knew his victorious prowess; and she only asked, "Where shall I remain, whilst you go forth to battle, Folko?"

"I had hoped," answered Biorn, "that you would be well contented to stay in this castle, lovely lady; I leave my son to guard you and attend on you."

Gabrielle hesitated an instant; and Sintram, who had resumed his position near the fire, muttered to himself as he fixed his eyes on the bright flames which were flashing up, "Yes, yes; so it will probably happen. I can fancy that Duke Menelaus had just left Sparta on some warlike expedition, when the young knight Paris met the lovely Helen that evening in the garden."

But Gabrielle, shuddering, although she knew not why, said quickly, "Without you, Folko? And must I forego the joy of seeing you fight? or the honor

of tending you, should you chance to receive a wound?"

Folko bowed, gracefully thanking his lady, and replied, "Come with your knight, since such is your pleasure, and be to him a bright guiding star. It is a good old northern custom that ladies should be present at knightly combats, and no true warrior of the north will fail to respect the place whence beams the light of their eyes. Unless, indeed," continued he with an inquiring look at Biorn, "unless Jarl Eric is not worthy of his forefather?"

"A man of honor," said Biorn confidently.

"Then array yourself, my fairest love," said the delighted Folko; "array yourself, and come forth with us to the battle-field to behold and judge our deeds."

"Come forth with us to the battle," echoed Sintram in a sudden transport of joy.

And they all dispersed in calm cheerfulness; Sintram betaking himself again to the wood, while the others retired to rest.

CHAPTER IX.

It was a wild dreary tract of country that, which bore the name of Niflung's Heath. According to tradition, the young Niflung, son of Hogni, the last of his race, had there ended darkly a sad and unsuccessful life. Many ancient grave-stones were still standing round about; and in the few oak-trees scattered here and there over the plain, huge eagles had built their nests. The beating of their heavy wings as they fought together, and their wild screams, were heard far off in more thickly peopled regions; and at the sound children would tremble in their cradles, and old men quake with fear as they slumbered over the blazing hearth.

As the seventh night, the last before the day of combat, was just beginning, two large armies were seen descending from the hills in opposite directions: that which came from the west was commanded by Eric the Aged, that from the east by Biorn of the Fiery Eyes. They appeared thus early in compliance with the custom which required that adversaries should always present themselves at the appointed field of battle before the time named, in order to prove that they rather sought than dreaded

the fight. Folko forthwith pitched on the most convenient spot the tent of blue samite fringed with gold, which he carried with him to shelter his gentle lady; whilst Sintram, in the character of herald, rode over to Jarl Eric to announce to him that the beauteous Gabrielle of Montfaucon was present in the army of the knight Biorn, and would the next morning be present as a judge of the combat.

Jarl Eric bowed low on receiving this pleasing message; and ordered his bards to strike up a lay, the words of which ran as follows: —

"Warriors bold of Eric's band,
Gird your glittering armor on;
Stand beneath to-morrow's sun
In your might.

"Fairest dame that ever gladden'd
Our wild shores with beauty's vision,
May thy bright eyes o'er our combat
Judge the right!

"Tidings of yon noble stranger
Long ago have reach'd our ears,
Wafted upon southern breezes
O'er the wave.

"Now midst yonder hostile ranks
In his warlike pride he meets us:
Folko comes! Fight, men of Eric,
True and brave!"

These woundrous tones floated over the plain, and reached the tent of Gabrielle. It was no new thing to her to hear her knight's fame celebrated on all sides; but now that she listened to his praises burst-

ing forth in the stillness of night from the mouth of his enemies, she could scarce refrain from kneeling at the feet of the mighty chieftain. But he with courteous tenderness held her up, and pressing his lips fervently on her soft hand, he said, "My deeds, O lovely lady, belong to thee, and not to me!"

Now the night had passed away, and the east was glowing; and on Niflung's Heath there was waving, and resounding, and glowing too. Knights put on their rattling armor, war-horses began to neigh, the morning draught went round in gold and silver goblets, while war-songs and the clang of harps resounded in the midst. A joyous march was heard in Biorn's camp, as Montfaucon, with his troops and retainers, clad in bright steel armor, conducted their lady up to a neighboring hill, where she would be safe from the spears which would soon be flying in all directions, and whence she could look freely over the battle-field. The morning sun, as it were in homage, played over her beauty; and as she came in view of the camp of Jarl Eric, his soldiers lowered their weapons, whilst the chieftains bent low the crests of their huge helmets. Two of Montfaucon's pages remained in attendance on Gabrielle; for so noble a service not unwillingly bridling their love of fighting. Both armies passed in front of her, saluting her and singing as they went; they then placed themselves in array, and the fight began.

The spears flew from the hands of the stout northern warriors, rattling against the broad shields under

which they sheltered themselves, or sometimes clattering as they met in the air; at intervals, on one side or the other, a man was struck, and fell silent in his blood. Then the Knight of Mountfaucon advanced with his troop of Norman horsemen — even as he dashed past, he did not fail to lower his shining sword to salute Gabrielle; and then with an exulting war-cry, which burst from many a voice, they charged the left wing of the enemy. Eric's foot-soldiers, kneeling firmly, received them with fixed javelins — many a noble horse fell wounded to death, and in falling brought his rider with him to the ground; others again crushed their foes under them in their death-fall. Folko rushed through — he and his war-steed unwounded — followed by a troop of chosen knights. Already were they falling into disorder — already were Biorn's warriors giving shouts of victory — when a troop of horse, headed by Jarl Eric himself, advanced against the valiant baron; and whilst his Normans, hastily assembled, assisted him in repelling this new attack, the enemy's infantry were gradually forming themselves into a thick mass, which rolled on and on. All these movements seemed caused by a warrior whose loud piercing shout was heard in the midst. And scarcely were the troops formed into this strange array, when suddenly they spread themselves out on all sides, carrying everything before them with the irresistible force of the burning torrent from Hecla.

Biorn's soldiers, who had thought to inclose their

enemies, lost courage and gave way before this wondrous onset. The knight himself in vain attempted to stem the tide of fugitives, and with difficulty escaped being carried away by it.

Sintram stood looking on this scene of confusion with mute indignation; friends and foes passed by him, all equally avoiding him, and dreading to come in contact with one whose aspect was so fearful, nay, almost unearthly, in his motionless rage. He aimed no blow either to right or left; his powerful battle-axe rested in his hand; but his eyes flashed fire, and seemed to be piercing the enemy's ranks through and through, as if he would find out who it was that had conjured up this sudden warlike spirit. He succeeded. A small man clothed in strange-looking armor, with large golden horns on his helmet, and a long visor advancing in front of it, was leaning on a two-edged curved spear, and seemed to be looking with derision at the flight of Biorn's troops as they were pursued by their victorious foes. "That is he," cried Sintram; "he who will drive us from the field before the eyes of Gabrielle!" And with the swiftness of an arrow he flew towards him with a wild shout. The combat was fierce, but not of long duration. To the wondrous dexterity of his adversary, Sintram opposed his far superior size; and he dealt so fearful a blow on the horned helmet, that a stream of blood rushed forth, the small man fell as if stunned, and after some frightful convulsive movements, his limbs appeared to stiffen in death.

His fall gave the signal for that of all Eric's army. Even those who had not seen him fall, suddenly lost their courage and eagerness for the battle, and retreated with uncertain steps, or ran in wild affright on the spears of their enemies. At the same time Montfaucon was dispersing Jarl Eric's cavalry, after a desperate conflict, — had hurled their chief from the saddle, and taken him prisoner with his own hand. Biorn of the Fiery Eyes stood victorious in the middle of the field of battle. The day was won.

CHAPTER X.

In sight of both armies, with glowing cheeks and looks of modest humility, Sintram was conducted by the brave baron up the hill where Gabrielle stood in all the lustre of her beauty. Both warriors bent the knee before her, and Folko said, solemnly, "Lady, this valiant youth of a noble race has deserved the reward of this day's victory. I pray you let him receive it from your fair hand."

Gabrielle bowed courteously, took off her scarf of blue and gold, and fastened to it a bright sword, which a page brought to her on a cushion of cloth of silver. She then, with a smile, presented the noble gift to Sintram, who was bending forward to receive it, when suddenly Gabrielle drew back, and turning to Folko said, "Noble baron, should not he on whom I bestow a scarf and sword be first admitted into the order of knighthood?" Light as a feather, Folko sprang up, and bowing low before his lady, gave the youth the accolade with solemn earnestness. Then Gabrielle buckled on his sword, saying, "For the honor of God and the service of virtuous ladies, young knight. I saw you fight, I saw you conquer, and my earnest prayers followed

you. Fight and conquer often again, as you have done this day, that the beams of your renown may shine over my far-distant country." And at a sign from Folko, she offered her tender lips for the new knight to kiss. Thrilling all over, and full of a holy joy, Sintram arose in silence, and hot tears streamed down his softened countenance, whilst the shout and the trumpets of the assembled troops greeted the youth with stunning applause. Old Rolf stood silently on one side, and as he looked in the mild beaming eyes of his foster-child, he calmly and piously returned thanks: —

> "The strife at length hath found its end,
> Rich blessings now shall heaven send!
> The evil foe is slain!"

Biorn and Jarl Eric had the while been talking together eagerly, but not unkindly. The conqueror now led his vanquished enemy up the hill and presented him to the baron and Gabrielle, saying, "Instead of two enemies, you now see two sworn allies; and I request you, my beloved guests and kinsfolk, receive him graciously as one who hence forward belongs to us."

He was so always," added Eric, smiling. "I sought, indeed, revenge; but I have now had enough of defeats both by sea and land. Yet I thank Heaven that neither in the Grecian seas, to the sea-king, nor on Niflung's Heath, to you, have I yielded ingloriously."

The Lord of Montfaucon assented cordially, and

heartily and solemnly was reconciliation made. Then Jarl Eric addressed Gabrielle with so noble a grace, that with a smile of wonder she gazed on the gigantic gray hero, and gave him her beautiful hand to kiss.

Meanwhile Sintram was speaking earnestly to his good Rolf; and at length he was heard to say, "But before all, be sure that you bury that wonderfully brave knight whom my battle-axe smote. Choose out the greenest hill for his resting-place, and the loftiest oak to shade his grave. Also, I wish you to open his visor, and to examine his countenance carefully, that so, though mortally smitten, we may not bury him alive; and moreover, that you may be able to describe to me him to whom I owe the noblest prize of victory."

Rolf bowed readily, and went.

"Our young knight is speaking there of one amongst the slain of whom I should like to hear more," said Folko, turning to Jarl Eric. "Who, dear Jarl, was that wonderful chieftain who led on your troops so skillfully, and who at last fell under Sintram's powerful battle-axe?"

"You ask me more than I know how to answer," replied Jarl Eric. "About three nights ago this stranger made his appearance amongst us. I was sitting with my chieftains and warriors round the hearth, forging our armor, and singing the while. Suddenly, above the din of our hammering and our singing we heard so loud a noise that it silenced us

in a moment, and we sat motionless as if we had been turned into stone. Before long the sound was repeated; and at last we made out that it must be caused by some person blowing a huge horn outside the castle, seeking for admittance. I went down myself to the gate, and as I passed through the court-yard all my dogs were so terrified by the extraordinary noise as to be howling and crouching in their kennels instead of barking. I chid them, and called to them, but even the fiercest would not follow me. Then, thought I, I must show you the way to set to work, so I grasped my sword firmly, I set my torch on the ground close beside me, and I let the gates fly open without further delay. For I well knew that it would be no easy matter for any one to come in against my will. A loud laugh greeted me, and I heard these words, 'Well, well, what mighty preparations are these before one small man can find the shelter he seeks!' And in truth I did feel myself redden with shame when I saw the small stranger standing opposite to me quite alone. I called to him to come in at once, and offered my hand to him; but he still showed some displeasure, and would not give me his in return. As he went up, however, he became more friendly; he showed me the golden horn on which he sounded that blast, and which he carried screwed on his helmet, as well as another exactly like it. When he was sitting with us in the hall, he behaved in a very strange manner: sometimes he was merry, some-

times cross; by turns courteous and rude in his demeanor, without any one being able to see a motive for such constant changes. I longed to know where he came from; but how could I ask my guest such a question? He told us as much as this, that he was starved with cold in our country, and that his own was much warmer. Also he appeared well acquainted with the city of Constantinople, and related fearful stories of how brothers, uncles, and nephews, nay, even fathers and sons, thrust each other from the throne, blinded, cut out tongues, and murdered. At length he said his own name — it sounded harmonious, like a Greek name, but none of us could remember it. Before long he displayed his skill as an armorer. He understood marvelously well how to handle the red-hot iron, and how to form it into more murderous weapons than any I had ever before seen. I would not suffer him to go on making them, for I was resolved to meet you in the field with equal arms, and such as we are all used to in our northern countries. Then he laughed, and said he thought it would be quite possible to be victorious without them, by skillful movements and the like; if only I would intrust the command of my infantry to him, I was sure of victory. Then I thought that he who makes arms well must also wield them well: yet I required some proof of his powers. Ye lords, he came off victorious in trials of strength such as you can hardly imagine; and although the fame of young Sintram, as a bold and brave warrior, is spread far

and wide, yet I can scarce believe that he could slay such an one as my Greek ally."

He would have continued speaking, but the good Rolf came hastily back with a few followers, the whole party so ghastly pale, that all eyes were involuntarily fixed on them, and looked anxiously to hear what tidings they brought. Rolf stood still, silent and trembling.

"Take courage, my old friend!" cried Sintram. "Whatever thou mayest have to tell is truth and light from thy faithful mouth."

"My dear master," began the old man, "be not angry, but as to burying that strange warrior whom you slew, it is a thing impossible. Would that we had never opened that wide, hideous visor! For so horrible a countenance grinned at us from underneath it, so distorted by death, and with so hellish an expression, that we hardly kept our senses. We could not by any possibility have touched him. I would rather be sent to kill wolves and bears in the desert, and look on whilst fierce birds of prey feast on their carcasses."

All present shuddered, and were silent for a time, till Sintram nerved himself to say, "Dear good old man, why use such wild words as I never till now heard thee utter? But tell me, Jarl Eric, did your ally appear altogether so awful while he was yet alive?"

"Not as far as I know," answered Jarl Eric, looking inquiringly at his companions, who were standing

around. They said the same thing; but on further questioning, it appeared that neither the chieftain, nor the knights, nor the soldiers, could say exactly what the stranger was like.

"We must then find it out for ourselves, and bury the corpse," said Sintram; and he signed to the assembled party to follow him. All did so except the Lord of Montfaucon, whom the whispered entreaty of Gabrielle kept at her side. He lost nothing thereby. For though Niflung's Heath was searched from one end to the other many times, yet the body of the unknown warrior was no longer to be found.

CHAPTER XI.

The joyful calm which came over Sintram on this day appeared to be more than a passing gleam. If too, at times, a thought of the knight Paris and Helen would inflame his heart with bolder and wilder wishes, it needed but one look at his scarf and sword, and the stream of his inner life glided again clear as a mirror, and serene within. "What can any man wish for more than has been already bestowed on me?" would he say to himself at such times, in still delight. And thus it went on for a long while.

The beautiful northern autumn had already begun to redden the leaves of the oaks and elms round the castle, when one day it chanced that Sintram was sitting in company with Folko and Gabrielle in almost the very same spot in the garden where he had before met that mysterious being whom, without knowing why, he had named the Little Master. But on this day how different did everything appear! The sun was sinking slowly over the sea; the mist of an autumnal evening was rising from the fields and meadows around towards the hill on which stood the huge castle. Gabrielle, placing her lute in Sintram's

hands, said to him, "Dear friend, so mild and gentle as you now are, I may well dare to intrust to you my tender little darling. Let me again hear you sing that lay of the land of flowers; for I am sure that it will now sound much sweeter than when you accompanied it with the vibrations of your fearful harp."

The young knight bowed as he prepared to obey the lady's commands. With a grace and softness hitherto unwonted, the tones resounded from his lips, and the wild song appeared to transform itself, and to bloom into a garden of the blessed. Tears stood in Gabrielle's eyes; and Sintram, as he gazed on the pearly brightness, poured forth tones of yet richer sweetness. When the last notes were sounded Gabrielle's angelic voice was heard to echo them; and as she repeated, —

"Sing heigh, sing ho, for that land of flowers!" —

Sintram put down the lute, and sighed with a thankful glance towards the stars, now rising in the heavens. Then Gabrielle, turning towards her lord, murmured these words: "Oh, how long have we been far away from our own shining castles and bright gardens! Oh, for that land of the sweetest flowers!"

Sintram could scarce believe that he heard aright, so suddenly did he feel himself as if shut out from paradise. But his last hope vanished before the courteous assurances of Folko, that he would endeavor to fulfill his lady's wishes the very next week,

and that their ship was lying off the shore ready to put to sea. She thanked him with a kiss imprinted softly on his forehead; and leaning on his arm, she bent her steps, singing and smiling, towards the castle.

Sintram, troubled in mind, as though turned into stone, remained behind forgotten. At length, when night was now in the sky, he started up wildly, ran up and down the garden, as if all his former madness had again taken possession of him; and then rushed out and wandered upon the wild moonlit hills. There he dashed his sword against the trees and bushes, so that on all sides was heard a sound of crashing and falling. The birds of night flew about him screeching in wild alarm; and the deer, startled by the noise, sprang away and took refuge in the thickest coverts.

On a sudden old Rolf appeared, returning home from a visit to the chaplain of Drontheim, to whom he had been relating, with tears of joy, how Sintram was softened by the presence of the angel Gabrielle, yea, almost healed, and how he dared to hope that the evil dreams had yielded. And now the sword, as it whizzed round the furious youth, had well-nigh wounded the good old man. He stopped short, and clasping his hands, he said, with a deep sigh, "Alas, Sintram! my foster-child, darling of my heart, what has come over thee, thus fearfully stirring thee to rage?"

The youth stood awhile as if spell-bound; he

looked in his old friend's face with a fixed and melancholy gaze, and his eyes became dim, like expiring watch-fires seen through a thick cloud of mist. At length he sighed forth these words, almost inaudibly: "Good Rolf, good Rolf, depart from me! thy garden of heaven is no home for me; and if sometimes a light breeze blow open its golden gates, so that I can look in and see the flowery meadow-land where the dear angels dwell, then straightway between them and me come the cold north wind and the icy storm, and the sounding doors fly together, and I remain without, lonely, in endless winter."

"Beloved young knight, oh, listen to me — listen to the good angel within you! Do you not bear in your hand that very sword with which the pure lady girded you? Does not her scarf wave over your raging breast? Do you not recollect how you used to say, that no man could wish for more than had fallen to you?"

"Yes, Rolf, I have said that," replied Sintram, sinking on the mossy turf, bitterly weeping. Tears also ran over the old man's white beard. Before long the youth stood again erect, his tears ceased to flow, his looks were fearful, cold, and grim; and he said, "You see, Rolf, I have passed blessed peaceful days, and I thought that the powers of evil would never again have dominion over me. So, perchance, it might have been, as day would ever be did the Sun ever stand in the sky. But ask the poor benighted Earth, wherefore she looks so dark! Bid

her again smile as she was wont to do! Old man, she cannot smile; and now that the gentle compassionate Moon has disappeared behind the clouds with her holy funeral veil, she cannot even weep. And in this hour of darkness, all that is wild and mad wakes up. So, stop me not; I tell thee, stop me not! Hurrah, behind, behind the pale Moon!" His voice changed to a hoarse murmur at these last words, stormlike. He tore away from the trembling old man, and rushed through the forest. Rolf knelt down and prayed, and wept silently.

CHAPTER XII.

WHERE the sea-beach was wildest, and the cliffs most steep and rugged, and close by the remains of three shattered oaks, haply marking where, in heathen times, human victims had been sacrificed, now stood Sintram, leaning, as if exhausted, on his drawn sword, and gazing intently on the dancing waves. The moon had again shone forth; and as her pale beams fell on his motionless figure through the quivering branches of the trees, he might have been taken for some fearful idol-image. Suddenly some one on the left half raised himself out of the high withered grass, uttered a faint groan, and again lay down. Then between the two companions began this strange talk: —

"Thou that movest thyself so strangely in the grass, dost thou belong to the living or to the dead?"

"As one may take it. I am dead to heaven and joy: I live for hell and anguish."

"Methinks that I have heard thee before."

"Oh yes."

"Art thou a troubled spirit? and was thy life-blood poured out here of old in sacrifice to idols?"

"I am a troubled spirit; but no man ever has, or ever can, shed my blood. I have been cast down — oh into a frightful abyss!"

"And didst thou there break thy neck?"

"I live, — and shall live longer than thou."

"Almost thou seemest to me the crazy pilgrim with the dead men's bones."

"I am not he, though often we are companions, — ay, walk together right near and friendly. But to you be it said, he thinks me mad. If sometimes I urge him, and say to him, 'Take!' then he hesitates, and points upwards towards the stars. And again, if I say, 'Take not!' then, to a certainty, he seizes on it in some awkward manner, and so he spoils my best joys and pleasures. But, in spite of this, we remain in some measure brothers-in-arms, and indeed, all but kinsmen."

"Give me hold of thy hand, and let me help thee to get up."

"Ho, ho! my active young sir, that might bring you no good. Yet, in fact, you have already helped to raise me. Give heed awhile."

Wilder and ever wilder were the strugglings on the ground; thick clouds hurried over the moon and the stars, on a long unknown wild journey; and Sintram's thoughts grew no less wild and stormy, while far and near an awful howling could be heard amidst the trees and the grass. At length the mysterious being arose from the ground. As if with a fearful curiosity, the moon, through a rent in the clouds,

cast a beam upon Sintram's companion, and made clear to the shuddering youth that the little Master stood by him.

"Avaunt!" cried he, "I will listen no more to thy evil stories about the knight Paris: they would end by driving me quite mad."

My stories about Paris are not needed for that!" grinned the little Master. "It is enough that the Helen of thy heart should be journeying towards Montfaucon. Believe me, madness has thee already, head and heart. Or wouldest thou that she should remain? For that, however, thou must be more courteous to me than thou art now."

Therewith he raised his voice towards the sea, as if fiercely rebuking it, so that Sintram could not but shudder and tremble before the dwarf. But he checked himself, and, grasping his sword-hilt with both hands, he said, contemptuously: "Thou and Gabrielle! what acquaintance hast thou with Gabrielle?"

"Not much," was the reply. And the little Master might be seen to quake with fear and rage as he continued: "I cannot well bear the name of thy Helen; do not din it in my ears ten times in a breath. But if the tempest should increase? If the waves should swell, and roll on till they form a foaming ring round the whole coast of Norway? The voyage to Montfaucon must in that case be altogether given up, and thy Helen would remain here, at least through the long, long, dark winter."

"If! if!" replied Sintram, with scorn. "Is the sea thy bond-slave? Are the storms thy fellow-workmen?"

"They are rebels, accursed rebels," muttered the little Master in his red beard. "Thou must lend me thy aid, sir knight, if I am to subdue them; but thou hast not the heart for it."

"Boaster, evil boaster!" answered the youth; "what dost thou ask of me?"

"Not much, sir knight; nothing at all for one who has strength and ardor of soul. Thou needest only look at the sea steadily and keenly for one half hour without ever ceasing to wish with all thy might that it should foam and rage and swell, and never again rest till winter has laid its icy hold upon your mountains. Then winter is enough to hinder Duke Menelaus from his voyage to Montfaucon. And now give me a lock of your black hair, which is blowing so wildly about your head, like ravens' or vultures' wings."

The youth drew his sharp dagger, madly cut off a lock of his hair, threw it to the strange being, and now gazed, as he desired, powerfully wishing, on the waves of the sea. And softly, quite softly, did the waters stir themselves, as one whispers in troubled dreams who would gladly rest and cannot. Sintram was on the point of giving up, when in the moon-beams a ship appeared, with white-swelling sails, towards the south. Anguish came over him, that Gabrielle would soon thus quickly sail away; he

wished again with all his power, and fixed his eyes intently on the watery abyss. "Sintram," a voice might have said to him, — "ah, Sintram, art thou indeed the same who so lately wert gazing on the moistened heaven of the eyes of Gabrielle?"

And now the waves heaved more mightily, and the howling tempest swept over the ocean; the breakers, white with foam, became visible in the moonlight. Then the little Master threw the lock of Sintram's hair up towards the clouds, and, as it was blown to and fro by the blast of wind, the storm burst in all its fury, so that sea and sky were covered with one thick cloud, and far off might be heard the cries of distress from many a sinking vessel.

But the crazy pilgrim with the dead men's bones rose up in the midst of the waves, close to the shore, gigantic, tall, fearfully rocking; the boat in which he stood was hidden from sight, so mightily raged the waves round about it.

"Thou must save him, little Master — thou must certainly save him," cried Sintram's voice, angrily entreating, through the roaring of the winds and waves. But the dwarf replied, with a laugh: "Be quite at rest for him; he will be able to save himself. The waves can do him no harm. Seest thou? They are only begging of him, and therefore they jump up so boldly round him; and he gives them bountiful alms — very bountiful, that I can assure thee."

In fact, as it seemed, the pilgrim threw some bones into the sea, and passed scatheless on his way. Sintram felt his blood run cold with horror, and he rushed wildly towards the castle. His companion had either fled or vanished away.

CHAPTER XIII.

In the castle, Biorn and Gabrielle and Folko of Montfaucon were sitting round the great stone table from which, since the arrival of his noble guests, those suits of armor had been removed. formerly the established companions of the lord of the castle, and placed altogether in a heap in the adjoining room. At this time, while the storm was beating so furiously against doors and windows, it seemed as if the ancient armor were also stirring in the next room, and Gabrielle several times half rose from her seat in great alarm, fixing her eyes on the small iron door, as though she expected to see an armed spectre issue therefrom, bending with his mighty helmet through the low vaulted doorway.

The knight Biorn smiled grimly, and said, as if he had guessed her thoughts: "Oh, he will never again come out thence; I have put an end to that forever."

His guests stared at him doubtingly; and with a strange air of unconcern, as though the storm had awakened all the fierceness of his soul, he began the following history:

"I was once a happy man myself; I could smile, as you do, and I could rejoice in the morning as you

do ; that was before the hypocritical chaplain had so bewildered the wise mind of my lovely wife with his canting talk, that she went into a cloister, and left me alone with our wild boy. That was not fair usage from the fair Verena. Well, so it was, that in the first days of her dawning beauty, before I knew her, many knights sought her hand, amongst whom was Sir Weigand the Slender ; and towards him the gentle maiden showed herself the most favorably inclined. Her parents were well aware that Weigand's rank and station were little below their own, and that his early fame as a warrior without reproach stood high ; so that before long Verena and he were accounted as affianced. It happened one day that they were walking together in the orchard, when a shepherd was driving his flock up the mountain beyond. The maiden saw a little snow-white lamb frolicking gayly, and longed for it. Weigand vaults over the railings, overtakes the shepherd, and offers him two gold bracelets for the lamb. But the shepherd will not part with it, and scarcely listens to the knight, going quietly the while up the mountain-side, with Weigand close upon him. At last Weigand loses patience. He threatens ; and the shepherd, sturdy and proud like all of his race in our northern land, threatens in return. Suddenly Weigand's sword resounds upon his head, — the stroke should have fallen flat, but who can control a fiery horse or a drawn sword? The bleeding shepherd, with a cloven skull, falls down the precipice ; his

frightened flock bleats on the mountain. Only the little lamb runs in its terror to the orchard, pushes itself through the garden-rails, and lies at Verena's feet, as if asking for help, all red with his master's blood. She took it up in her arms, and from that moment never suffered Weigand the Slender to appear again before her face. She continued to cherish the little lamb, and seemed to take pleasure in nothing else in the world, and became pale and turned towards heaven, as the lilies are. She would soon have taken the veil, but just then I came to aid her father in a bloody war, and rescued him from his enemies. The old man represented this to her, and softly smiling, she gave me her lovely hand. His grief would not suffer the unhappy Weigand to remain in his own country. It drove him forth as a pilgrim to Asia, whence our forefathers came, and there he did wonderful deeds, both of valor and self-abasement. Truly, my heart was strangely weak when I heard him spoken of at that time. After some years he returned, and wished to build a church or monastery on that mountain towards the west, whence the walls of my castle are distinctly seen. It was said that he wished to become a priest there, but it fell out otherwise. For some pirates had sailed from the southern seas, and, hearing of the building of this monastery, their chief thought to find much gold belonging to the lord of the castle and to the master builders, or else, if he surprised and carried them off, to extort from them a mighty

ransom. He did not yet know northern courage and northern weapons; but he soon gained that knowledge. Having landed in the creek under the black rocks, he made his way through a by-path up to the building, surrounded it, and thought in himself that the affair was now ended. Ha! then out rushed Weigand and his builders, and fell upon them with swords and hatchets and hammers. The heathens fled away to their ships, with Weigand behind to take vengeance on them. In passing by our castle he caught a sight of Verena on the terrace, and, for the first time during so many years, she bestowed a courteous and kind salutation on the glowing victor. At that moment a dagger, hurled by one of the pirates in the midst of his hasty flight, struck Weigand's uncovered head, and he fell to the ground bleeding and insensible. We completed the rout of the heathens; then I had the wounded knight brought into the castle; and my pale Verena glowed as lilies in the light of the morning sun, and Weigand opened his eyes with a smile when he was brought near her. He refused to be taken into any room but the small one close to this where the armor is now placed; for he said that he felt as if it were a cell like that which he hoped soon to inhabit in his quiet cloister. All was done after his wish: my sweet Verena nursed him, and he appeared at first to be on the straightest road to recovery; but his head continued weak and liable to be confused by the slightest emotion; his walk was rather a falling

than a walking, and his cheeks were colorless. We could not let him go. When we were sitting here together in the evening, he used always to come tottering into the hall through the low doorway ; and my heart was sad and wrathful too, when the soft eyes of Verena beamed so sweetly on him, and a glow like that of the evening sky hovered over her lily cheeks. But I bore it, and I could have borne it to the end of our lives, — when, alas ! Verena went into a cloister ! "

His head fell so heavily on his folded hands, that the stone table seemed to groan beneath it, and he remained a long while motionless as a corpse. When he again raised himself up, his eyes glared fearfully as he looked round the hall, and he said to Folko : " Your beloved Hamburghers, Gotthard Lentz, and Rudlieb his son, they have much to answer for ! Who bid them come and be shipwrecked so close to my castle ? "

Folko cast a piercing look on him, and a fearful inquiry was on the point of escaping his lips, but another look at the trembling Gabrielle made him silent, at least for the present moment, and the knight Biorn continued his narrative.

" Verena was with her nuns, I was left alone, and my despair had driven me throughout the day through forest and brake and mountain. In the twilight I returned to my deserted castle, and scarcely was I in the hall, when the little door creaked, and Weigand, who had slept through all,

crept towards me and asked: 'Where can Verena be?' Then I became as mad, and howled to him, 'She is gone mad, and so am I, and you also, and now we are all mad!' Merciful Heaven, the wound on his head burst open, and a dark stream flowed over his face — ah! how different from the redness when Verena met him at the castle-gate; and he rushed forth, raving mad, into the wilderness without, and ever since has wandered all around as a crazy pilgrim."

He was silent, and so were Folko and Gabrielle, all three pale and cold like images of the dead. At length the fearful narrator added in a low voice, and as if he were quite exhausted: "He has visited me since that time, but he will never again come through the little door. Have I not established peace and order in my castle?"

CHAPTER XIV.

Sintram had not returned home, when those of the castle betook themselves to rest in deep bewilderment. No one thought of him, for every heart was filled with strange forebodings, and with uncertain cares. Even the heroic breast of the knight of Montfaucon heaved in doubt.

Old Rolf still remained without, weeping in the forest, heedless of the storm which beat on his unprotected head, while he waited for his young master. But he had gone a very different way; and when the morning dawned, he entered the castle from the opposite side.

Gabrielle's slumbers had been sweet during the whole night. It had seemed to her that angels with golden wings had blown away the wild histories of the evening before, and had wafted to her the bright flowers, the sparkling sea, and the green hills of her own home. She smiled, and drew her breath calmly and softly, whilst the magical tempest raged and howled through the forests, and continued to battle with the troubled sea. But in truth when she awoke in the morning, and heard still the rattling of the windows, and saw the clouds, as if dissolved in mist

and steam, still hiding the face of the heavens, she could have wept for anxiety and sadness, especially when she heard from her maidens that Folko had already left their apartment clad in full armor as if prepared for a combat. At the same time she heard the sound of the heavy tread of armed men in the echoing halls, and, on inquiring, found that the knight of Montfaucon had assembled all his retainers to be in readiness to protect their lady.

Wrapped in a cloak of ermine, she stood trembling like a tender flower just sprung up out of the snow, tottering beneath a winter's storm. Then Sir Folko entered the room, in all his shining armor, and peacefully carrying his golden helmet with the long shadowy plumes in his hand. He saluted Gabrielle with cheerful serenity, and at a sign from him, her attendants retired, while the men-at-arms without were heard quietly dispersing.

"Lady," said he, as he took his seat beside her, on a couch to which he led her, already reassured by his presence, — "lady, will you forgive your knight for having left you to endure some moments of anxiety; but honor and stern justice called him. Now all is set in order, quietly and peacefully; dismiss your fears and every thought that has troubled you, as things which are no more."

"But you and Biorn?" asked Gabrielle.

"On the word of a knight," replied he, "all is well there." And thereupon he began to talk over indifferent subjects with his usual ease and wit; but Ga-

brielle, bending towards him, said with deep emotion, —

"O Folko, my knight, the flower of my life, my protector and my dearest hope on earth, tell me all, if thou mayst. But if a promise binds thee, it is different. Thou knowest that I am of the race of Portamour, and I would ask nothing from my knight which could cast even a breath of suspicion on his spotless shield."

Folko thought gravely for one instant; then looking at her with a bright smile, he said: "It is not that, Gabrielle; but canst thou bear what I have to disclose? Wilt thou not sink down under it, as a slender fir gives way under a mass of snow?"

She raised herself somewhat proudly, and said: "I have already reminded thee of the name of my father's house. Let me now add, that I am the wedded wife of the Baron of Montfaucon."

"Then so let it be," replied Folko solemnly; "and if that must come forth openly which should ever have remained hidden in the darkness which belongs to such deeds of wickedness, at least let it come forth less fearfully with a sudden flash. Know then, Gabrielle, that the wicked knight who would have slain my friends Gotthard and Rudlieb is none other than our kinsman and host, Biorn of the Fiery Eyes."

Gabrielle shuddered and covered her eyes with her fair hands; but at the end of a moment she looked up with a bewildered air, and said: "I have

heard wrong surely, although it is true that yesterday evening such a thought struck me. For did not you say awhile ago that all was settled and at peace between you and Biorn? Between the brave baron and such a man after such a crime?"

"You heard aright," answered Folko, looking with fond delight on the delicate yet high-minded lady. "This morning with the earliest dawn I went to him and challenged him to a mortal combat in the neighboring valley, if he were the man whose castle had well-nigh become an altar of sacrifice to Gotthard and Rudlieb. He was already completely armed, and merely saying, 'I am he,' he followed me to the forest. But when we stood alone at the place of combat, he flung away his shield down a giddy precipice; then his sword was hurled after it; and next with gigantic strength he tore off his coat of mail, and said, 'Now fall on, thou minister of vengeance; for I am a heavy sinner, and I dare not fight with thee.' How could I then attack him? A strange truce was agreed on between us. He is half as my vassal, and yet I solemnly forgave him in my own name and in that of my friends. He was contrite, and yet no tear was in his eye, no gentle word on his lips. He is only kept under by the power with which I am endued by having right on my side, and it is on that tenure that Biorn is my vassal. I know not, lady, whether you can bear to see us together on these terms; if not, I will ask for hospitality in some other castle; there are none in Norway which

would not receive us joyfully and honorably, and this wild autumnal storm may put off our voyage for many a day. Only this I think, that if we depart directly and in such a manner, the heart of this savage man will break."

"Where my noble lord remains, there I also remain joyfully under his protection," replied Gabrielle; and again her heart glowed with rapture at the greatness of her knight.

CHAPTER XV.

The noble lady had just unbuckled her knight's armor with her own fair hands, — on the field of battle alone were pages or esquires bidden handle Montfaucon's armor, — and now she was throwing over his shoulders his mantle of blue velvet embroidered with gold, when the door opened gently, and Sintram entered the room, humbly greeting them. Gabrielle received him kindly, as she was wont, but suddenly turning pale, she looked away and said, —

"O Sintram, what has happened to you? And how can one single night have so fearfully altered you?"

Sintram stood still, thunderstruck, and feeling as if he himself did not know what had befallen him. Then Folko took him by the hand, led him towards a bright polished shield, and said very earnestly, "Look here at yourself, young knight!"

At the first glance Sintram drew back horrified. He fancied that he saw the little Master before him with that single upright feather sticking out of his cap; but he at length perceived that the mirror was only showing him his own image and none other,

and that his own wild dagger had given him this strange and spectre-like aspect, as he could not deny to himself.

"Who has done that to you?" asked Folko, yet more grave and solemn. "And what terror makes your disordered hair stand on end?"

Sintram knew not what to answer. He felt as if a judgment were coming on him, and a shameful degrading from his knightly rank. Suddenly Folko drew him away from the shield, and taking him towards the rattling window, he asked: "Whence comes this tempest?"

Still Sintram kept silence. His limbs began to tremble under him; and Gabrielle, pale and terrified, whispered, "O Folko, my knight, what has happened? Oh, tell me; are we come into an enchanted castle?"

"The land of our northern ancestors," replied Folko with solemnity, "is full of mysterious knowledge. But we may not, for all that, call its people enchanters; still this youth has cause to watch himself narrowly; he whom the evil one has touched by so much as one hair of his head" . . . .

Sintram heard no more; with a deep groan he staggered out of the room. As he left it, he met old Rolf, still almost benumbed by the cold and storms of the night. Now, in his joy at again seeing his young master, he did not remark his altered appearance; but as he accompanied him to his sleeping room he said, "Witches and spirits of the tempest

must have taken up their abode on the sea-shore. I am certain that such wild storms never arise without some devilish arts."

Sintram fell into a fainting-fit, from which Rolf could with difficulty recover him sufficiently to appear in the great hall at the mid-day hour. But before he went down, he caused a shield to be brought, saw himself therein, and cut close round, in grief and horror, the rest of his long black hair, so that he made himself look almost like a monk; and thus he joined the others already assembled round the table. They all looked at him with surprise; but old Biorn rose up and said fiercely, "Are you going to betake yourself to a cloister, as well as the fair lady your mother?"

A commanding look from the Baron of Montfaucon checked any farther outbreak; and as if in apology, Biorn added, with a forced smile, "I was only thinking if any accident had befallen him, like Absalom's, and if he had been obliged to save himself from being strangled by parting with all his hair."

"You should not jest with holy things," answered the baron severely, and all were silent. No sooner was the repast ended, than Folko and Gabrielle, with a grave and courteous salutation, retired to their apartments.

CHAPTER XVI.

Life in the castle took from this time quite another form. Those two bright beings, Folko and Gabrielle, spent most part of the day in their apartments, and when they showed themselves, it was with quiet dignity and grave silence, while Biorn and Sintram stood before them in humble fear. Nevertheless, Biorn could not bear the thought of his guests seeking shelter in any other knight's abode. When Folko once spoke of it, something like a tear stood in the wild man's eye. His head sank, and he said softly, "As you please; but I feel that if you go, I shall run among the rocks for days."

And thus they all remained together; for the storm continued to rage with such increasing fury over the sea, that no sea voyage could be thought of, and the oldest man in Norway could not call to mind such an autumn. The priests examined all the Runic books, the bards looked through their lays and tales, and yet they could find no record of the like. Biorn and Sintram braved the tempest; but during the few hours in which Folko and Gabrielle showed themselves, the father and son were always in the castle, as if respectfully waiting upon them;

the rest of the day — nay, often through whole nights, they rushed through the forests and over the rocks in pursuit of bears. Folko the while called up all the brightness of his fancy, all his courtly grace, in order to make Gabrielle forget that she was living in this wild castle, and that the long, hard northern winter was setting in, which would ice them in for many a month. Sometimes he would relate bright tales; then he would play the liveliest airs to induce Gabrielle to lead a dance with her attendants; then, again, handing his lute to one of the women, he would himself take a part in the dance, well knowing to express thereby after some new fashion his devotion to his lady. Another time he would have the spacious halls of the castle prepared for his armed retainers to go through their warlike exercises, and Gabrielle always adjudged the reward to the conqueror. Folko often joined the circle of combatants; yet so that he only met their attacks, defending himself, but depriving no one of the prize. The Norwegians, who stood around as spectators, used to compare him to the demigod Baldur, one of the heroes of their old traditions, who was wont to let the darts of his companions be all hurled against him, conscious that he was invulnerable, and of his own indwelling strength.

At the close of one of these martial exercises, old Rolf advanced towards Folko, and beckoning him with an humble look, said softly, "They call you the beautiful, mighty Baldur, — and they are right. But

even the beautiful, mighty Baldur did not escape death. Take heed to yourself." Folko looked at him wondering. "Not that I know of any treachery," continued the old man; "or that I can even foresee the likelihood of any. God keep a Norwegian from such a fear. But when you stand before me in all the brightness of your glory, the fleetingness of everything earthly weighs down my mind, and I cannot refrain from saying, 'Take heed, noble baron! oh, take heed! Even the most beautiful glory comes to an end.'"

"Those are wise and pious thoughts," replied Folko calmly, "and I will treasure them in a pure heart."

The good Rolf was often with Folko and Gabrielle, and made a connecting link between the two widely differing parties in the castle. For how could he have ever forsaken his own Sintram! Only in the wild hunting expeditions through the howling storms and tempests he no longer was able to follow his young lord.

At length the icy reign of winter began in all its glory. On this account a return to Normandy was impossible, and therefore the magical storm was lulled. The hills and valleys shone brilliantly in their white attire of snow, and Folko used sometimes, with skates on his feet, to draw his lady in a light sledge over the glittering frozen lakes and streams. On the other hand, the bear-hunts of the

lord of the castle and his son took a still more desperate and to them joyous course.

About this time, — when Christmas was drawing near, and Sintram was seeking to overpower his dread of the awful dreams by the most daring expeditions, — about this time, Folko and Gabrielle stood together on one of the terraces of the castle. The evening was mild; the snow-clad fields were glowing in the red light of the setting sun; from below there were heard men's voices singing songs of ancient heroic times, while they worked in the armorer's forge. At last the songs died away, the beating of hammers ceased, and, without the speakers being seen, or there being any possibility of distinguishing them by their voices, the following discourse arose: —

"Who is the bravest amongst all those whose race derives its origin from our renowned land?"

"It is Folko of Montfaucon."

"Rightly said; but tell me, is there anything from which even this bold baron draws back?"

"In truth there is one thing, — and we who have never left Norway face it quite willingly and joyfully."

"And that is —?"

"A bear-hunt in winter, over trackless plains of snow, down frightful ice-covered precipices."

"Truly thou answerest aright, my comrade. He who knows not how to fasten our skates on his feet, how to turn in them to the right or left at a mo-

ment's warning, he may be a valiant knight in other respects, but he had better keep away from our hunting parties, and remain with his timid wife in her apartments." At which the speakers were heard to laugh well pleased, and then to betake themselves again to their armorers' work.

Folko stood long buried in thought. A glow beyond that of the evening sky reddened his cheek. Gabrielle also remained silent, considering she knew not what. At last she took courage, and embracing her beloved, she said: "To-morrow thou wilt go forth to hunt the bear, wilt thou not? and thou wilt bring the spoils of the chase to thy lady?"

The knight gave a joyful sign of assent; and the rest of the evening was spent in dances and music.

CHAPTER XVII.

"See, my noble lord," said Sintram the next morning, when Folko had expressed his wish of going out with him, "these skates of ours give such wings to our course, that we go down the mountain-side swiftly as the wind; and even in going up again we are too quick for any one to be able to pursue us, and on the plains no horse can keep up with us; and yet they can only be worn with safety by those who are well practiced. It seems as though some strange spirit dwelt in them, which is fearfully dangerous to any that have not learnt the management of them in their childhood."

Folko answered somewhat proudly: "Do you suppose that this is the first time that I have been amongst your mountains? Years ago I have joined in this sport, and, thank Heaven, there is no knightly exercise which does not speedily become familiar to me."

Sintram did not venture to make any further objections, and still less did old Biorn. They both felt relieved when they saw with what skill and ease Folko buckled the skates on his feet, without suffering any one to assist him. This day they hunted up the mountain in pursuit of a fierce bear which had

often before escaped from them. Before long it was necessary that they should separate, and Sintram offered himself as companion to Folko, who, touched by the humble manner of the youth, and his devotion to him, forgot all that had latterly seemed mysterious in the pale altered being before him, and agreed heartily. As now they continued to climb higher and higher up the mountain, and saw from many a giddy height the rocks and crags below them looking like a vast expanse of sea suddenly turned into ice whilst tossed by a violent tempest, the noble Montfaucon drew his breath more freely. He poured forth war-songs and love-songs in the clear mountain air, and the startled echoes repeated from rock to rock the lays of his Frankish home. He sprang lightly from one precipice to another, using strongly and safely his staff for support, and turning now to the right, now to the left, as the fancy seized him; so that Sintram was fain to exchange his former anxiety for a wondering admiration, and the hunters, whose eyes had never been taken off the baron, burst forth with loud applause, proclaiming far and wide the fresh glory of their guest.

The good fortune which usually accompanied Folko's deeds of arms seemed still unwilling to leave him. After a short search, he and Sintram found distinct traces of the savage animal, and with beating hearts they followed the track so swiftly, that even a winged enemy would have been unable to escape from them. But the creature whom they sought

did not attempt a flight; he lay sulkily in a cavern near the top of a steep precipitous rock, infuriated by the shouts of the hunters, and only waiting in his lazy fury for some one to be bold enough to climb up to his retreat, that he might tear him to pieces. Folko and Sintram had now reached the foot of this rock, the rest of the hunters being dispersed over the far-extending plain. The track led the two companions up the rock, and they set about climbing on the opposite sides of it, that they might be the more sure of not missing their prey. Folko reached the lonely topmost point first, and cast his eyes around. A wide, boundless tract of country, covered with untrodden snow, was spread before him, melting in the distance into the lowering clouds of the gloomy evening sky. He almost thought that he must have missed the traces of the fearful beast; when close beside him from a cleft in the rock issued a long growl, and a huge black bear appeared on the snow, standing on its hind legs, and with glaring eyes it advanced towards the baron. Sintram the while was struggling in vain to make his way up the rock against the masses of snow continually slipping down.

Joyful at a combat so long untried as almost to be new, Folko of Montfaucon leveled his hunting spear, and awaited the attack of the wild beast. He suffered it to approach so near that its fearful claws were almost upon him; then he made a thrust, and the spear-head was buried deep in the bear's breast.

But the furious beast still pressed on with a fierce growl, kept up on its hind legs by the cross-iron of the spear, and the knight was forced to plant his feet deep in the earth to resist the savage assault; and ever close before him the grim and bloody face of the bear, and close in his ear its deep savage growl, wrung forth partly by the agony of death, partly by thirst for blood. At length the bear's resistance grew weaker, and the dark blood streamed freely upon the snow; he tottered, and one powerful thrust hurled him backwards over the edge of the precipice. At the same instant, Sintram stood by the Baron of Montfaucon. Folko said, drawing a deep breath: "But I have not yet the prize in my hands, and have it I must, since fortune has given me a claim to it. Look, one of my skates seems to be out of order. Thinkest thou, Sintram, that it holds enough to slide down to the foot of the precipice?"

"Let me go instead," said Sintram. "I will bring you the head and the claws of the bear."

"A true knight," replied Folko with some displeasure, "never does a knightly deed by halves. What I ask is, whether my skate will still hold?"

As Sintram bent down to look, and was on the point of saying, "No!" he suddenly heard a voice close to him, saying, "Why, yes, to be sure; there is no doubt about it."

Folko thought that Sintram had spoken, and slid down with the swiftness of an arrow, whilst his com-

panion looked up in great surprise. The hated form of the little Master met his eyes. As he was going to address him with angry words, he heard the sound of the baron's fearful fall, and he stood still in silent horror. There was a breathless silence also in the abyss below.

"Now, why dost thou delay?" said the little Master, after a pause. "He is dashed to pieces. Go back to the castle, and take the fair Helen to thyself."

Sintram shuddered. Then his hateful companion began to praise Gabrielle's charms in so glowing, deceiving words, that the heart of the youth swelled with emotions he had never before known. He only thought of him who was now lying at the foot of the rock as of an obstacle removed between him and heaven: he turned towards the castle.

But a cry was heard below: "Help! help! my comrade! I am yet alive, but I am sorely wounded."

Sintram's will was changed, and he called to the baron, "I am coming."

But the little Master said, "Nothing can be done to help Duke Menelaus; and the fair Helen knows it already. She is only waiting for Knight Paris to comfort her." And with detestable craft he wove in that tale with what was actually happening, bringing in the most highly wrought praises of the lovely Gabrielle; and alas! the dazzled youth yielded to him, and fled! Again he heard far off the baron's voice calling to him, "Knight Sintram, Knight Sintram, thou on whom I bestowed the holy order, haste to

me and help me! The she-bear and her whelps will be upon me, and I cannot use my right arm! Knight Sintram, Knight Sintram, haste to help me!"

His cries were overpowered by the furious speed with which the two were carried along on their skates, and by the evil words of the little Master, who was mocking at the late proud bearing of Duke Menelaus towards the poor Sintram. At last he shouted, "Good luck to you, she-bear! good luck to your whelps! There is a glorious meal for you! Now you will feed upon the fear of Heathendom, him at whose name the Moorish brides weep, the mighty Baron of Montfaucon. Never again, O dainty knight, will you shout at the head of your troops, 'Mountjoy St. Denys!'" But scarce had this holy name passed the lips of the little Master, than he set up a howl of anguish, writhing himself with horrible contortions, and wringing his hands, and ended by disappearing in a storm of snow which then arose.

Sintram planted his staff firmly in the ground, and stopped. How strangely did the wide expanse of snow, the distant mountains rising above it, and the dark green fir-woods — how strangely did they all look at him in cold reproachful silence! He felt as if he must sink under the weight of his sorrow and his guilt. The bell of a distant hermitage came floating sadly over the plain. With a burst of tears he exclaimed, as the darkness grew thicker round him, "My mother! my mother! I had once a beloved, tender mother, and she said I was a good child!" A

ray of comfort came to him as if brought on an angel's wing; perhaps Montfaucon was not yet dead! and he flew like lightning along the path, back to the steep rock. When he got to the fearful place, he stooped and looked anxiously down the precipice. The moon, just risen in full majesty, helped him. The knight of Montfaucon, pale and bleeding, was half kneeling against the rock; his right arm, crushed in his fall, hung powerless at his side; it was plain that he could not draw his good sword out of the scabbard. But nevertheless he was keeping the bear and her young ones at bay by his bold threatening looks, so that they only crept round him, growling angrily; every moment ready for a fierce attack, but as often driven back affrighted at the majestic air by which he conquered even when defenseless.

"Oh, what a hero would there have perished!" groaned Sintram, "and through whose guilt?" In an instant his spear flew with so true an aim that the bear fell weltering in her blood; the young ones ran away howling.

The baron looked up with surprise. His countenance beamed as the light of the moon fell upon it, grave and stern, yet mild, like some angelic vision. "Come down!" he beckoned; and Sintram slid down the side of the precipice, full of anxious haste. He was going to attend to the wounded man, but Folko said, "First cut off the head and claws of the bear which I slew. I promised to bring the spoils

of the chase to my lovely Gabrielle. Then come to me, and bind up my wounds. My right arm is broken." Sintram obeyed the baron's commands. When the tokens of victory had been secured, and the broken arm bound up, Folko desired the youth to help him back to the castle.

"O heavens!" said Sintram in a low voice, "if I dared to look in your face! or only knew how to come near you!"

"Thou wert indeed going on in an evil course," said Montfaucon gravely; "but how could we, any of us, stand before God, did not repentance help us! At any rate, thou hast now saved my life, and let that thought cheer thy heart."

The youth with tenderness and strength supported the baron's left arm, and they both went their way silently in the moonlight.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Sounds of wailing were heard from the castle as they approached; the chapel was solemnly lighted up; within it knelt Gabrielle, lamenting for the death of the knight of Montfaucon.

But how quickly was all changed, when the noble baron, pale indeed, and bleeding, yet having escaped all mortal danger, stood smiling at the entrance of the holy building, and said, in a low, gentle voice, "Look up, Gabrielle, and be not affrighted; for, by the honor of my race, thy knight still lives." Oh! with what joy did Gabrielle's eyes sparkle, as she turned to her knight, and then raised them again to heaven, still streaming, but from the deep source of thankful joy! With the help of two pages, Folko knelt down beside her, and they both sanctified their happiness with a silent prayer.

When they left the chapel, the wounded knight being tenderly supported by his lady, Sintram was standing without in the darkness, himself as gloomy as the night, and, like a bird of the night, shunning the sight of men. Yet he came trembling forward into the torch-light, laid the bear's head and claws at the feet of Gabrielle, and said, "The noble Folko

of Montfaucon presents the spoils of to-day's chase to his lady."

The Norwegians burst forth with shouts of joyful surprise at the stranger knight, who in the very first hunting expedition had slain the most fearful and dangerous beast of their mountains.

Then Folko looked around with a smile as he said, "And now none of you must jeer at me, if I stay at home for a short time with my timid wife."

Those who the day before had talked together in the armorer's forge, came out from the crowd, and bowing low, they replied, "Noble baron, who could have thought that there was no knightly exercise in the whole world in the which you would not show yourself far above all other men?"

"The pupil of old Sir Hugh may be somewhat trusted," answered Folko, kindly. "But now, you bold northern warriors, bestow some praises also on my deliverer who saved me from the claws of the she-bear, when I was leaning against the rock wounded by my fall."

He pointed to Sintram, and the general shout was again raised; and old Rolf, with tears of joy in his eyes, bent his head over his foster-son's hand. But Sintram drew back shuddering.

"Did you but know," said he, "whom you see before you, all your spears would be aimed at my heart; and perhaps that would be the best thing for me. But I spare the honor of my father and of his race, and for this time I will not confess. Only this much must you know, noble warriors" —

"Young man," interrupted Folko with a reproving look, "already again so wild and fierce? I desire that thou wilt hold thy peace about thy dreaming fancies."

Sintram was silenced for a moment; but hardly had Folko begun smilingly to move towards the steps of the castle, than he cried out, "Oh, no, no, noble wounded knight, stay yet awhile; I will serve thee in everything that thy heart can desire; but herein I cannot serve thee. Brave warriors, you must and shall know so much as this: I am no longer worthy to live under the same roof with the noble Baron of Montfaucon and his angelic wife Gabrielle. And you, my aged father, good night; long not for me. I intend to live in the stone fortress on the Rocks of the Moon, till a change of some kind come over me.

There was that in his way of speaking against which no one dared to set himself, not even Folko.

The wild Biorn bowed his head humbly, and said, "Do according to thy pleasure, my poor son; for I fear that thou art right."

Then Sintram walked solemnly and silently through the castle-gate, followed by the good Rolf. Gabrielle led her exhausted lord up to their apartments.

CHAPTER XIX.

That was a mournful journey on which the youth and his aged foster-father went towards the Rocks of the Moon, through the wild tangled paths of the snow-clad valleys. Rolf from time to time sang some verses of hymns, in which comfort and peace were promised to the penitent sinner, and Sintram thanked him for them with looks of grateful sadness. Neither of them spoke a word else.

At length, when the dawn of day was approaching, Sintram broke silence by saying, "Who are those two sitting yonder by the frozen stream — a tall man and a little one? Their own wild hearts must have driven them also forth into the wilderness. Rolf, dost thou know them? The sight of them makes me shudder."

"Sir," answered the old man, "your disturbed mind deceives you. There stands a lofty fir-tree, and the old weather-beaten stump of an oak, half-covered with snow, which gives them a somewhat strange appearance. There are no men sitting yonder."

"But Rolf, look there! look again carefully! Now they move, they whisper together."

"Sir, the morning breeze moves the branches, and whistles in the sharp pine-leaves and in the yellow oak-leaves, and rustles the crisp snow."

"Rolf, now they are both coming towards us. Now they are standing before us, quite close."

"Sir, it is we who get nearer to them as we walk on, and the setting moon throws such long giant-like shadows over the plain."

"Good evening!" said a hollow voice; and Sintram knew it was the crazy pilgrim, near to whom stood the malignant little Master, looking more hideous than ever.

"You are right, sir knight," whispered Rolf, as he drew back behind Sintram, and made the sign of the cross on his breast and his forehead.

The bewildered youth, however, advanced towards the two figures, and said, "You have always taken wonderful pleasure in being my companions. What do you expect will come of it? And do you choose to go now with me to the stone fortress? There I will tend thee, poor pale pilgrim; and as to thee, frightful Master, most evil dwarf, I will make thee shorter by the head, to reward thee for thy deeds yesterday."

"That would be a fine thing," sneered the little Master; "and perhaps thou imaginest that thou wouldst be doing a great service to the whole world? And, indeed, who knows? Something might be gained by it! Only, poor wretch, thou canst not do it."

The pilgrim meantime was waving his pale head to and fro thoughtfully, saying, "I believe truly, that thou wouldst willingly have me, and I would go to thee willingly, but I may not yet. Have patience awhile; thou wilt yet surely see me come, but at a distant time; and first we must again visit thy father together, and then also thou wilt learn to call me by my right name, my poor friend."

"Beware of disappointing me again!" said the little Master to the pilgrim in a threatening voice; but he, pointing with his long, shriveled hand towards the sun, which was just now rising, said, "Stop either that sun or me, if thou canst!"

Then the first rays fell on the snow, and little Master ran, muttering, down a precipice; but the pilgrim walked on in the bright beams, calmly and with great solemnity, towards a neighboring castle on the mountain. It was not long before its chapel-bell was heard tolling for the dead.

"For Heaven's sake," whispered the good Rolf to his knight, — "for Heaven's sake, Sir Sintram, what kind of companions have you here? One of them cannot bear the light of God's blessed sun, and the other has no sooner set foot in a dwelling than tidings of death wail after his track. Could he have been a murderer?"

"I do not think that," said Sintram. "He seemed to me the best of the two. But it is a strange willfulness of his not to come with me. Did I not invite him kindly? I believe that he can sing well,

and he should have sung to me some gently lullaby. Since my mother has lived in a cloister, no one sings lullabies to me any more."

At this tender recollection his eyes were bedewed with tears. But he did not himself know what he had said besides, for there was wildness and confusion in his spirit. They arrived at the Rocks of the Moon, and mounted up to the stone fortress. The castellan, an old, gloomy man, the more devoted to the young knight from his dark melancholy and wild deeds, hastened to lower the draw-bridge. Greetings were exchanged in silence, and in silence did Sintram enter, and those joyless gates closed with a crash behind the future recluse.

CHAPTER XX.

Yes truly, a recluse, or at least something like it, did poor Sintram now become! For towards the time of the approaching Christmas festival his fearful dreams came over him, and seized him so fiercely, that all the esquires and servants fled with shrieks out of the castle, and would never venture back again. No one remained with him except Rolf and the old castellan. After a while, indeed, Sintram became calm, but he went about looking so pallid and still, that he might have been taken for a wandering corpse. No comforting of the good Rolf, no devout soothing lays, were of any avail; and the castellan, with his fierce, scarred features, his head almost entirely bald from a huge sword-cut, his stubborn silence, seemed like a yet darker shadow of the miserable knight. Rolf often thought of going to summon the holy chaplain of Drontheim; but how could he have left his lord alone with the gloomy castellan, a man who at all times raised in him a secret horror? Biorn had long had this wild strange warrior in his service, and honored him on account of his unshaken fidelity and his fearless courage, though neither the knight nor any one else

knew whence the castellan came, nor, indeed, exactly who he was. Very few people knew by what name to call him; but that was the more needless, since he never entered into discourse with any one. He was the castellan of the stone fortress on the Rocks of the Moon, and nothing more.

Rolf committed his deep heartfelt cares to the merciful God, trusting that He would soon come to his aid; and the merciful God did not fail him. For on Christmas Eve the bell at the draw-bridge sounded, and Rolf, looking over the battlements, saw the chaplain of Drontheim standing there, with a companion, indeed, that surprised him; for close beside him appeared the crazy pilgrim, and the dead men's bones on his dark mantle shone very strangely in the glimmering starlight: but the sight of the chaplain filled the good Rolf too full of joy to leave room for any doubt in his mind; for, thought he, whoever comes with *him* cannot but be welcome! And so he let them both in with respectful haste and ushered them up to the hall, where Sintram, pale and with a fixed look, was sitting under the light of one flickering lamp. Rolf was obliged to support and assist the crazy pilgrim up the stairs, for he was quite benumbed with cold.

"I bring you a greeting from your mother," said the chaplain as he came in; and immediately a sweet smile passed over the young knight's countenance, and its deadly pallidness gave place to a bright soft glow.

"O Heaven!" murmured he, "does then my mother yet live, and does she care to know anything about me?"

"She is endowed with a wonderful presentiment of the future," replied the chaplain; "and all that you ought either to do or to leave undone is faithfully mirrored in various ways in her mind, during a half-waking trance. Now she knows of your deep sorrow; and she sends me, the father-confessor of her convent, to comfort you, but at the same time to warn you; for, as she affirms, and as I am also inclined to think, many strange and heavy trials lie before you."

Sintram bowed himself towards the chaplain with his arms crossed over his breast, and said, with a gentle smile, "Much have I been favored — more, a thousand times more, than I could have dared to hope in my best hours — by this greeting from my mother, and your visit, reverend sir; and all after falling more fearfully low than I had ever fallen before. The mercy of the Lord is great; and how heavy soever may be the weight and punishment which he may send, I trust, with His grace, to be able to bear it."

Just then the door opened, and the castellan came in with a torch in his hand, the red glare of which made his face look the color of blood. He cast a terrified glance at the crazy pilgrim, who had just sunk back in a swoon, and was supported on his seat and tended by Rolf; then he stared with astonish-

ment at the chaplain, and at last murmured, "A strange meeting! I believe that the hour for confession and reconciliation is now arrived."

"I believe so too," replied the priest, who had heard his low whisper; "this seems to be truly a day rich in grace and peace. That poor man yonder, whom I found half frozen by the way, would make a full confession to me at once, before he followed me to a place of shelter. Do as he has done, my dark-browed warrior, and delay not your good purpose for one instant."

Thereupon he left the room with the willing castellan, but he turned back to say, "Sir Knight, and your esquire! take good care the while of my sick charge."

Sintram and Rolf did according to the chaplain's desire; and when at length their cordials made the pilgrim open his eyes once again, the young knight said to him with a friendly smile, "Seest thou? thou art come to visit me, after all. Why didst thou refuse me when, a few nights ago, I asked thee so earnestly to come? Perhaps I may have spoken wildly and hastily. Did that scare thee away?"

"A sudden expression of fear came over the pilgrim's countenance; but soon he again looked up at Sintram with an air of gentle humility, saying, "O my dear, dear lord, I am most entirely devoted to you — only never speak to me of former passages between you and me. I am terrified whenever you do it. For my lord, either I am mad and have for-

gotten all that is past, or that Being has met you in the wood, whom I look upon as my very powerful twin-brother."

Sintram laid his hand gently on the pilgrim's mouth, as he answered, "Say nothing more about that matter: I most willingly promise to be silent."

Neither he nor old Rolf could understand what appeared to them so awful in the whole matter; but both shuddered.

After a short pause, the pilgrim said, "I would rather sing you a song — a soft, comforting song. Have you not a lute here?"

Rolf fetched one; and the pilgrim, half-raising himself on the couch, sang the following words: —

"When death is coming near,
When thy heart shrinks in fear,
And thy limbs fail,
Then raise thy hands and pray
To Him who smooths thy way
Through the dark vale.

"Seest thou the eastern dawn,
Hear'st thou in the red morn
The angel's song?
Oh, lift thy drooping head,
Thou who in gloom and dread
Hast lain so long.

"Death comes to set thee free;
Oh, meet him cheerily
As thy true friend,
And all thy fears shall cease,
And in eternal peace
Thy penance end."

"Amen," said Sintram and Rolf, folding their hands; and whilst the last chords of the lute still resounded, the chaplain and the castellan came slowly and gently into the room. "I bring a precious Christmas gift," said the priest. "After many sad years, hope of reconciliation and peace of conscience are returning to a noble, disturbed mind. This concerns thee, beloved pilgrim; and do thou, my Sintram, with a joyful trust in God, take encouragement and example from it."

"More than twenty years ago," began the castellan, at a sign from the chaplain — "more than twenty years ago I was a bold shepherd, driving my flock up the mountains. A young knight followed me, whom they called Weigand the Slender. He wanted to buy of me my favorite little lamb for his fair bride, and offered me much red gold for it. I sturdily refused. Overbold youth boiled up in us both. A stroke of his sword hurled me senseless down the precipice."

"Not killed?" asked the pilgrim in a scarce audible voice.

"I am no ghost," replied the castellan, somewhat morosely; and then, after an earnest look from the priest, he continued, more humbly: "I recovered slowly and in solitude, with the help of remedies which were easily found by me, a shepherd, in our productive valleys. When I came back into the world, no man knew me, with my scarred face, and my now bald head. I heard a report going through

the country, that on account of this deed of his, Sir Weigand the Slender had been rejected by his fair betrothed Verena, and how he had pined away, and she had wished to retire into a convent, but her father had persuaded her to marry the great knight Biorn. Then there came a fearful thirst for vengeance into my heart, and I disowned my name, and my kindred, and my home, and entered the service of the mighty Biorn, as a strange wild man, in order that Weigand the Slender should always remain a murderer, and that I might feed on his anguish. So have I fed upon it for all these long years; I have fed frightfully upon his self-imposed banishment, upon his cheerless return home, upon his madness. But to-day" — and hot tears gushed from his eyes — "but to-day God has broken the hardness of my heart; and, dear Sir Weigand, look upon yourself no more as a murderer, and say that you will forgive me, and pray for him who has done you so fearful an injury, and"—

Sobs choked his words. He fell at the feet of the pilgrim, who with tears of joy pressed him to his heart, in token of forgiveness.

CHAPTER XXI.

The joy of this hour passed from its first overpowering brightness to the calm, thoughtful aspect of daily life; and Weigand, now restored to health, laid aside the mantle with dead men's bones, saying: "I had chosen for my penance to carry these fearful remains about with me, with the thought that some of them might have belonged to him whom I have murdered. Therefore I sought for them round about, in the deep beds of the mountain-torrents, and in the high nests of the eagles and vultures. And while I was searching, I sometimes — could it have been only an illusion? — seemed to meet a being who was very like myself, but far, far more powerful, and yet still paler and more haggard."

An imploring look from Sintram stopped the flow of his words. With a gentle smile, Weigand bowed towards him, and said: "You know now all the deep, unutterably deep, sorrow which preyed upon me. My fear of you, and my yearning love for you, are no longer an enigma to your kind heart. For, dear youth, though you may be like your fearful father, you have also the kind, gentle heart of your mother; and its reflection brightens your pallid,

stern features, like the glow of a morning sky, which lights up ice-covered mountains and snowy valleys with the soft radiance of joy. But, alas! how long you have lived alone amidst your fellow-creatures! And how long since you have seen your mother, my dearly loved Sintram!"

"I feel, too, as though a spring were gushing up in the barren wilderness," replied the youth; "and I should perchance be altogether restored, could I but keep you long with me, and weep with you, dear lord. But I have that within me which says that you will very soon be taken from me."

"I believe, indeed," said the pilgrim, "that my late song was very nearly my last, and that it contained a prediction full soon to be accomplished in me. But, as the soul of man is always like the thirsty ground, the more blessings God has bestowed on us, the more earnestly do we look out for new ones; so would I crave for one more before, as I hope, my blessed end. Yet, indeed, it cannot be granted me," added he, with a faltering voice; "for I feel myself too utterly unworthy of so high a gift."

"But it will be granted!" said the chaplain, joyfully. "'He that humbleth himself shall be exalted;' and I fear not to take one purified from murder to receive a farewell from the holy and forgiving countenance of Verena."

The pilgrim stretched both his hands up towards heaven, and, an unspoken thanksgiving poured from his beaming eyes, and brightened the smile that played on his lips.

Sintram looked sorrowfully on the ground, and sighed gently to himself: "Alas! who would dare accompany?"

"My poor, good Sintram," said the chaplain, in a tone of the softest kindness, "I understand thee well; but the time is not yet come. The powers of evil will again raise up their wrathful heads within thee, and Verena must check both her own and thy longing desires, until all is pure in thy spirit as in hers. Comfort thyself with the thought that God looks mercifully upon thee, and that the joy so earnestly sought for will come — if not here, most assuredly beyond the grave."

But the pilgrim, as though awaking out of a trance, rose mightily from his seat, and said: "Do you please to come forth with me, reverend chaplain? Before the sun appears in the heavens, we could reach the convent gates, and I should not be far from heaven."

In vain did the chaplain and Rolf remind him of his weakness: he smiled, and said there could be no words about it; and he girded himself, and tuned the lute which he had asked leave to take with him. His decided manner overcame all opposition, almost without words; and the chaplain had already prepared himself for the journey, when the pilgrim looked with much emotion at Sintram, who, oppressed with a strange weariness, had sunk, half asleep, on a couch, and said: "Wait a moment. I know that he wants me to give him a soft lullaby." The

pleased smile of the youth seemed to say, Yes; and the pilgrim, touching the strings with a light hand, sang these words: —

"Sleep peacefully, dear boy:
Thy mother sends the song
That whispers round thy couch,
To lull thee all night long.
In silence and afar
For thee she ever prays,
And longs once more in fondness
Upon thy face to gaze.

"And when thy waking cometh,
Then in thy every deed,
In all that may betide thee,
Unto her words give heed.
Oh, listen for her voice,
If it be yea or nay;
And though temptation meet thee,
Thou shalt not miss the way.

"If thou canst listen rightly,
And nobly onward go,
Then pure and gentle breezes
Around thy cheeks shall blow.
Then on thy peaceful journey
Her blessing thou shalt feel,
And though from thee divided,
Her presence o'er thee steal.

"O safest, sweetest comfort!
O blest and living light!
That, strong in Heaven's power,
All terrors puts to flight!
Rest quietly, sweet child,
And may the gentle numbers

Thy mother sends to thee
Waft peace unto thy slumbers."

Sintram fell into a deep sleep, smiling, and breathing softly Rolf and the castellan remained by his bed, whilst the two travellers pursued their way in the quiet starlight.

CHAPTER XXII.

The dawn had almost appeared, when Rolf, who had been asleep, was awakened by low singing; and as he looked round, he perceived, with surprise, that the sounds came from the lips of the castellan, who said, as if in explanation, "So does Sir Weigand sing at the convent-gates, and they are kindly opened to him." Upon which, old Rolf fell asleep again, uncertain whether what had passed had been a dream or a reality. After a while the bright sunshine awoke him again; and when he rose up, he saw the countenance of the castellan wonderfully illuminated by the red morning rays; and altogether those features, once so fearful, were shining with a soft, nay almost child-like mildness. The mysterious man seemed to be the while listening to the motionless air, as if he were hearing a most pleasant discourse or lofty music; and as Rolf was about to speak, he made him a sign of entreaty to remain quiet, and continued in his eager listening attitude.

At length he sank slowly and contentedly back in his seat, whispering, "God be praised! She has granted his last prayer; he will be laid in the burial-ground of the convent, and now he has forgiven me

in the depths of his heart. I can assure you that he finds a peaceful end."

Rolf did not dare ask a question, or awake his lord; he felt as if one already departed had spoken to him.

The castellan long remained still, always smiling brightly. At last he raised himself a little, again listened, and said, "It is over. The sound of the bells is very sweet. We have overcome. Oh, how soft and easy does the good God make it to us!" And so it came to pass. He stretched himself back as if weary, and his soul was freed from his care-worn body.

Rolf now gently awoke his young knight, and pointed to the smiling dead. And Sintram smiled too; he and his good esquire fell on their knees, and prayed to God for the departed spirit. Then they rose up, and bore the cold body to the vaulted hall, and watched by it with holy candles until the return of the chaplain. That the pilgrim would not come back again, they very well knew.

Accordingly towards mid-day the chaplain returned alone. He could scarcely do more than confirm what was already known to them. He only added a comforting and hopeful greeting from Sintram's mother to her son, and told that the blissful Weigand had fallen asleep like a tired child, whilst Verena, with calm tenderness, held a crucifix before him.

"And in eternal peace our penance end!"

sang Sintram, gently to himself; and they prepared a last resting-place for the now so peaceful castellan, and laid him therein with all the due solemn rites.

The chaplain was obliged soon afterwards to depart; but bidding Sintram farewell, he again said kindly to him; "Thy dear mother assuredly knows how gentle and calm and good thou art now!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

In the castle of Sir Biorn of the Fiery Eyes, Christmas Eve had not passed so brightly and happily; but yet, there too all had gone visibly according to God's will.

Folko, at the entreaty of the lord of the castle, had allowed Gabrielle to support him into the hall; and the three now sat at the round stone table, whereon a sumptuous meal was laid. On either side there were long tables, at which sat the retainers of both knights in full armor, according to the custom of the north. Torches and lamps lighted the lofty hall with an almost dazzling brightness.

Midnight had now begun its solemn reign, and Gabrielle softly reminded her wounded knight to withdraw. Biorn heard her, and said: "You are right, fair lady; our knight needs rest. Only let us first keep up one more old honorable custom."

And at his sign four attendants brought in with pomp a great boar's head, which looked as if cut out of solid gold, and placed it in the middle of the stone table. Biorn's retainers rose with reverence, and took off their helmets; Biorn himself did the same.

"What means this?" asked Folko very gravely.

"What thy forefathers and mine have done on every Yule feast," answered Biorn. "We are going to make vows on the boar's head, and then pass the goblet round to their fulfillment."

"We no longer keep what our ancestors called the Yule feast," said Folko; "we are good Christians, and we keep holy Christmas-tide."

"To do the one, and not to leave the other undone," answered Biorn. "I hold my ancestors too dear to forget their knightly customs. Those who think otherwise may act according to their wisdom, but that shall not hinder me. I swear by the golden boar's head" — And he stretched out his hand to lay it solemnly upon it.

But Folko called out, "In the name of our holy Saviour, forbear. Where I am, and still have breath and will, none shall celebrate undisturbed the rites of the wild heathens."

Biorn of the Fiery Eyes glared angrily at him. The men of the two barons separated from each other, with a hollow sound of rattling armor, and ranged themselves in two bodies on either side of the hall, each behind its leader. Already here and there helmets were fastened and visors closed.

"Bethink thee yet what thou art doing," said Biorn. "I was about to vow an eternal union with the house of Montfaucon, nay, even to bind myself to do it grateful homage; but if thou disturb me in the customs which have come to me from my fore-

fathers, look to thy safety and the safety of all that is dear to thee. My wrath no longer knows any bounds."

Folko made a sign to the pale Gabrielle to retire behind his followers, saying to her, "Be of good cheer, my noble wife; weaker Christians have braved for the sake of God and of His holy Church, greater dangers than now seem to threaten us. Believe me the Lord of Montfaucon is not so easily ensnared.

Gabrielle obeyed, something comforted by Folko's fearless smile, but this smile inflamed yet more the fury of Biorn. He again stretched out his hand towards the boar's head, as if about to make some dreadful vow, when Folko snatched a gauntlet of Biorn's off the table, with which he, with his unwounded left arm, struck so powerful a blow on the gilt idol, that it fell crashing to the ground, shivered to pieces. Biorn and his followers stood as if turned to stone. But soon swords were grasped by armed hands, shields were taken down from the walls, and an angry, threatening murmur sounded through the hall.

At a sign from Folko, a battle-axe was brought him by one of his faithful retainers; he swung it high in air with his powerful left hand, and stood looking like an avenging angel as he spoke these words through the tumult with awful calmness: "What seek ye, O deluded Northmen? What wouldst thou, sinful lord? Ye are indeed become

heathens; and I hope to show you, by my readiness for battle, that it is not in my right arm alone that God has put strength for victory. But if ye can yet hear, listen to my words. Biorn, on this same accursed, and now, by God's help, shivered boar's head, thou didst lay thy hand when thou didst swear to sacrifice any inhabitants of the German towns that should fall into thy power. And Gotthard Lentz came, and Rudlieb came, driven on these shores by the storm. What didst thou then do, O savage Biorn? What did ye do at his bidding, ye who were keeping the Yule feast with him? Try your fortune on me. The Lord will be with me, as He was with those holy men. To arms, and" — he turned to his warriors — "let our battle-cry be Gotthard and Rudlieb!"

Then Biorn let drop his drawn sword, then his followers paused, and none among the Norwegians dared lift his eyes from the ground. By degrees, they one by one began to disappear from the hall; and at last Biorn stood quite alone opposite to the baron and his followers. He seemed hardly aware that he had been deserted, but he fell on his knees, stretched out his shining sword, pointed to the broken boar's head, and said, "Do with me as you have done with that; I deserve no better. I ask but one favor, only one; do not disgrace me, noble baron, by seeking shelter in another castle of Norway."

"I fear you not," answered Folko, after some

thought; "and, as far as may be, I freely forgive you." Then he drew the sign of the cross over the wild form of Biorn, and left the hall with Gabrielle. The retainers of the house of Montfaucon followed him proudly and silently.

The hard spirit of the fierce lord of the castle was now quite broken, and he watched with increased humility every look of Folko and Gabrielle. But they withdrew more and more into the happy solitude of their own apartments, where they enjoyed, in the midst of the sharp winter, a bright spring-tide of happiness. The wounded condition of Folko did not hinder the evening delights of songs and music and poetry, but rather a new charm was added to them when the tall, handsome knight leant on the arm of his delicate lady, and they thus, changing as it were their deportment and duties, walked slowly through the torch-lit halls, scattering their kindly greetings like flowers among the crowds of men and women.

All this time little or nothing was heard of poor Sintram. The last wild outbreak of his father had increased the terror with which Gabrielle remembered the self-accusations of the youth; and the more resolutely Folko kept silence, the more did she bode some dreadful mystery. Indeed, a secret shudder came over the knight when he thought on the pale, dark-haired youth. Sintram's repentance had bordered on settled despair; no one knew even what he was doing in the fortress of evil-report on the

Rocks of the Moon. Strange rumors were brought by the retainers who had fled from it, that the evil spirit had obtained complete power over Sintram, that no man could stay with him, and that the fidelity of the dark mysterious castellan had cost him his life.

Folko could hardly drive away the fearful suspicion that the lonely young knight was become a wicked magician.

And perhaps, indeed, evil spirits did flit about the banished Sintram, but it was without his calling them up. In his dreams he often saw the wicked enchantress Venus, in her golden chariot drawn by winged cats, pass over the battlements of the stone fortress, and heard her say, mocking him, "Foolish Sintram! hadst thou but obeyed the little Master, thou wouldst now be in Helen's arms, and the Rocks of the Moon would be called the Rocks of Love, and the stone fortress would be the garden of roses. Thou wouldst have lost thy pale face and dark hair, — for thou art only enchanted, dear youth, — and thine eyes would have beamed more softly, and thy cheeks bloomed more freshly, and thy hair would have been more golden than was that of Prince Paris when men wondered at his beauty. Oh, how Helen would have loved thee!" Then she showed him in a mirror, how, as a marvelously beautiful knight, he knelt before Gabrielle, who sank into his arms blushing as the morning. When he awoke from such dreams, he would seize eagerly the sword and scarf

given him by his lady — as a shipwrecked man seizes the plank which is to save him; and while the hot tears fell on them, he would murmur to himself, "There was, indeed, one hour in my sad life when I was worthy and happy."

Once he sprang up at midnight after one of these dreams, but this time with more thrilling horror; for it had seemed to him that the features of the enchantress Venus had changed towards the end of her speech, as she looked down upon him with marvelous scorn, and she appeared to him as the hideous little Master. The youth had no better means of calming his distracted mind than to throw the sword and scarf of Gabrielle over his shoulders, and to hasten forth under the solemn starry canopy of the wintry sky. He walked in deep thought backwards and forwards under the leafless oaks and the snow laden firs which grew on the high ramparts.

Then he heard a sorrowful cry of distress sound from the moat; it was as if some one were attempting to sing, but was stopped by inward grief. Sintram exclaimed, "Who's there?" and all was still. When he was silent, and again began his walk, the frightful groanings and moanings were heard afresh, as if they came from a dying person. Sintram overcame the horror which seemed to hold him back, and began in silence to climb down into the deep dry moat which was cut in the rock. He was soon so low down that he could no longer see the stars

shining; beneath him moved a shrouded form; and sliding with involuntary haste down the steep descent, he stood near the groaning figure; it ceased its lamentations, and began to laugh like a maniac from beneath its long, folded, female garments.

"Oh, ho, my comrade! oh, ho, my comrade! wert thou going a little too fast? Well, well, it is all right; and see now, thou standest no higher than I, my pious, valiant youth! Take it patiently, — take it patiently!"

"What dost thou want with me? Why dost thou laugh? Why dost thou weep?" asked Sintram impatiently.

"I might ask thee the same questions," answered the dark figure, "and thou wouldst be less able to answer me than I to answer thee. Why dost thou laugh? Why dost thou weep? Poor creature! But I will show thee a remarkable thing in thy fortress, of which thou knowest nothing. Give heed!"

And the shrouded figure began to scratch and scrape at the stones till a little iron door opened, and showed a long passage which led into the deep darkness.

"Wilt thou come with me?" whispered the strange being: "it is the shortest way to thy father's castle. In half an hour we shall come out of this passage, and we shall be in thy beauteous lady's apartment. Duke Menelaus shall lie in a magic sleep, — leave that to me, — and then thou wilt take the slight, delicate form in thine arms, and bring her

to the Rocks of the Moon; so thou wilt win back all that seemed lost by thy former wavering."

Sintram trembled visibly, fearfully shaken to and fro by the fever of passion and the stings of conscience. But at last, pressing the sword and scarf to his heart, he cried out, "Oh, that fairest, most glorious hour of my life! If I lose all other joys, I will hold fast that brightest hour!"

"A bright, glorious hour!" said the figure from under its veil, like an evil echo. "Dost thou know whom thou then conqueredst? A good old friend, who only showed himself so sturdy to give thee the glory of overcoming him. Wilt thou look?"

The dark garments of the little figure flew open, and the dwarf warrior in strange armor, the gold horns on his helmet, and the curved spear in his hand, the very same whom Sintram thought he had slain on Niflung's Heath, now stood before him and laughed: "Thou seest, my youth, everything in the wide world is but dreams and froth; wherefore hold fast the dream which delights thee, and sip up the froth which refreshes thee! Hasten to that underground passage, it leads up to thy angel Helen. Or wouldst thou first know thy friend yet better?"

His visor opened, and the hateful face of the little Master glared upon the knight. Sintram asked, as if in a dream, "Art thou also that wicked enchantress Venus?"

"Something like her," answered the little Master, laughing, "or rather she is something like me. And

if thou wilt only get disenchanted, and recover the beauty of Prince Paris, — then, O Prince Paris," and his voice changed to an alluring song, "then, O Prince Paris, I shall be fair like thee!"

At this moment the good Rolf appeared above on the rampart; a consecrated taper in his lantern shone down into the moat, as he sought for the missing young knight. "In God's name, Sir Sintram," he called out, "what has the spectre of him whom you slew on Niflung's Heath, and whom I never could bury, to do with you?"

"Seest thou well? hearest thou well?" whispered the little Master, and drew back into the darkness of the underground passage. "The wise man up there knows me well. There was nothing in thy heroic feat. Come, take the joys of life while thou mayst."

But Sintram sprang back, with strong effort, into the circle of light made by the shining of the taper from above, and cried out, "Depart from me, unquiet spirit! I know well that I bear a name on me in which thou canst have no part."

Little Master rushed in fear and rage into the passage, and yelling, shut the iron door behind him. It seemed as if he could still be heard groaning and roaring.

Sintram climbed up the wall of the moat, and made a sign to his foster-father not to speak to him: he only said, "One of my best joys, yes, the very

best, has been taken from me, but, by God's help, I am not yet lost."

In the earliest light of the following morning, he and Rolf stopped up the entrance to the perilous passage with huge blocks of stone.

CHAPTER XXIV.

The long northern winter was at last ended, the fresh green leaves rustled merrily in the woods, patches of soft moss twinkled amongst the rocks, the valleys grew green, the brooks sparkled, the snow melted from all but the highest mountain-tops, and the bark which was ready to carry away Folko and Gabrielle, danced on the sunny waves of the sea. The baron, now quite recovered, and strong and fresh as though his health had sustained no injury, stood one morning on the shore with his fair lady; and, full of glee at the prospect of returning to their home, the noble pair looked on well pleased at their attendants who were busied in lading the ship.

Then said one of them, in the midst of a confused sound of talking: "But what has appeared to me the most fearful and the most strange thing in this northern land is the stone fortress on the Rocks of the Moon. I have never, indeed, been inside it, but when I used to see it in our huntings, towering above the tall fir-trees, there came a tightness over my breast, as if something unearthly were dwelling in it. And a few weeks ago, when the snow was yet lying hard in the valleys, I came unawares quite

close upon the strange building. The young knight Sintram was walking alone on the ramparts as twilight came on, like the spirit of a departed knight, and he drew from the lute which he carried such soft, melancholy tones, and he sighed so deeply and sorrowfully" . . . .

The voice of the speaker was drowned in the noise of the crowd, and as he also just then reached the ship with his package hastily fastened up, Folko and Gabrielle could not hear the rest of his speech. But the fair lady looked on her knight with eyes dim with tears, and sighed: "Is it not behind those mountains that the Rocks of the Moon lie? The unhappy Sintram makes me sad at heart."

"I understand thee, sweet, gracious lady, and the pure compassion of thy heart," replied Folko, instantly ordering his swift-footed steed to be brought. He placed his noble lady under the charge of his retainers, and leaping into the saddle, he hastened, followed by the grateful smiles of Gabrielle, along the valley towards the stone fortress.

Sintram was seated near the draw-bridge, touching the strings of the lute, and shedding some tears on the golden chords, almost as Montfaucon's esquire had described him. Suddenly a cloudy shadow passed over him, and he looked up, expecting to see a flight of cranes in the air; but the sky was clear and blue. While the young knight was still wondering, a long, bright spear fell at his feet from a battlement of the armory-turret.

"Take it up, — make good use of it! thy foe is near at hand! Near also is the downfall of thy dearest happiness." Thus he heard it distinctly whispered in his ear; and it seemed to him that he saw the shadow of the little Master glide close by him to a neighboring cleft in the rock. But at the same time also, a tall, gigantic, haggard figure passed along the valley, in some measure like the departed pilgrim, only much, very much larger, and he raised his long, bony arm, fearfully threatening, then disappeared in an ancient tomb.

At the very same instant Sir Folko of Montfaucon came swiftly as the wind up the Rocks of the Moon, and he must have seen something of those strange apparitions, for, as he stopped close behind Sintram, he looked rather pale, and asked low and earnestly: "Sir Knight, who are those two with whom you were just now holding converse here?"

"The good God knows," answered Sintram; "I know them not." — "If the good God does but know!" cried Montfaucon: "but I fear me that He knows very little more of you or your deeds."

"You speak strangely harsh words," said Sintram. "Yet ever since that evening of misery, — alas! and even long before, — I must bear with all that comes from you. Dear sir, you may believe me, I know not those fearful companions; I call them not, and I know not what terrible curse binds them to my footsteps. The merciful God, as I would hope, is mindful of me the while, — as a faithful shepherd

does not forget even the worst and most widely-straying of his flock, but calls after it with an anxious voice in the gloomy wilderness."

Then the anger of the baron was quite melted. Two bright tears stood in his eyes, and he said: "No, assuredly God has not forgotten thee; only do thou not forget thy gracious God. I did not come to rebuke thee; I came to bless thee in Gabrielle's name and in my own. The Lord preserve thee, the Lord guide thee, the Lord lift thee up! And, Sintram, on the far off-shores of Normandy I shall beat thee in mind, and I shall hear how thou strugglest against the curse which weighs down thy unhappy life; and if thou ever shake it off, and stand as a noble conqueror over Sin and Death, then thou shalt receive from me a token of love and reward, more precious than either thou or I can understand at this moment."

The words flowed prophetically from the baron's lips; he himself was only half-conscious of what he said. With a kind salutation he turned his noble steed, and again flew down the valley towards the sea-shore.

"Fool, fool! thrice a fool!" whispered the angry voice of the little Master in Sintram's ear. But old Rolf was singing his morning hymn in clear tones within the castle, and the last lines were these: —

"Whom worldlings scorn,
Who lives forlorn,
On God's own word doth rest;

With heavenly light
His path is bright:
His lot among the blest."

Then a holy joy took possession of Sintram's heart, and he looked around him yet more gladly than in the hour when Gabrielle gave him the scarf and sword and Folko dubbed him knight.

CHAPTER XXV.

The baron and his lovely lady were sailing across the broad sea with favoring gales of spring, nay, the coast of Normandy had already appeared above the waves; but still was Biorn of the Fiery Eyes sitting gloomy and speechless in his castle. He had taken no leave of his guests. There was more of proud fear of Montfaucon than of reverential love for him in his soul, especially since the adventure with the boar's head; and the thought was bitter to his haughty spirit that the great baron, the flower and glory of their whole race, should have come in peace to visit him, and should now be departing in displeasure, — in stern, reproachful displeasure. He had constantly before his mind, and it never failed to bring fresh pangs, the remembrance of how all had come to pass, and how all might have gone otherwise; and he was always fancying he could hear the songs in which after generations would recount this voyage of the great Folko, and the worthlessness of the savage Biorn. At length, full of fierce anger, he cast away the fetters of his troubled spirit, he burst out of the castle with all his horsemen, and began to carry on a warfare more fearful and more lawless than any in which he had yet been engaged.

Sintram heard the sound of his father's war-horn; and, committing the stone fortress to old Rolf, he sprang forth, ready armed for the combat. But the flames of the cottages and farms on the mountains rose up before him, and showed him, written as if in characters of fire, what kind of war his father was waging. Yet he went on towards the spot where the army was mustered, but only to offer his mediation, affirming that he would not lay his hand on his good sword in so abhorred a service, even though the stone fortress, and his father's castle besides, should fall before the vengeance of their enemies. Biorn hurled the spear which he held in his hand against his son with mad fury. The deadly weapon whizzed past him: Sintram remained standing with his visor raised; he did not move one limb in his defense, when he said: "Father, do what you will; but I join not in your godless warfare."

Biorn of the Fiery Eyes laughed scornfully: "It seems I am always to have a spy over me here; my son succeeds to the dainty French knight!" But nevertheless he came to himself, accepted Sintram's mediation, made amends for the injuries he had done, and returned gloomily to his castle. Sintram went back to the Rocks of the Moon.

Such occurrences were frequent after that time. It went so far that Sintram came to be looked upon as the protector of all those whom his father pursued with relentless fury; but nevertheless, sometimes his own wildness would carry the young knight away to

accompany his fierce father in his fearful deeds. Then Biorn used to laugh with horrible pleasure, and to say: "See there, my son, how the flames we have lighted blaze up from the villages, as the blood spouts up from the wounds our swords have made! It is plain to me, however much thou mayest pretend to the contrary, that thou art, and wilt ever remain, my true and beloved heir!"

After thus fearfully erring, Sintram could find no comfort but in hastening to the chaplain of Drontheim, and confessing to him his misery and his sins. The chaplain would freely absolve him, after due penance and repentance, and again raise up the broken-hearted youth; but would often say: "Oh how nearly hadst thou reached thy last trial, and gained the victory, and looked on Verena's countenance, and atoned for all! Now thou hast thrown thyself back for years. Think, my son, on the shortness of man's life; if thou art always falling back anew, how wilt thou ever gain the summit on this side the grave?"

Years came and went, and Biorn's hair was white as snow, and the youth Sintram had reached the middle age. Old Rolf was now scarcely able to leave the stone fortress; and sometimes he said: "I feel it a burden that my life should yet be prolonged; but also there is much comfort in it, for I still think the good God has in store for me here below some great happiness; and it must be something in which you are concerned, my beloved Sir Sintram, for what else in the whole world could rejoice me?"

But all remained as it was, and Sintram's fearful dreams at Christmas-time, each year rather increased than diminished in horror. Again the holy season was drawing near, and the mind of the sorely afflicted knight was more troubled than ever before. Sometimes, if he had been reckoning up the nights till it should come, a cold sweat would stand on his forehead, while he said, "Mark my words, dear old foster-father, this time something most awfully decisive lies before me."

One evening he felt an overwhelming anxiety about his father. It seemed to him that the Prince of Darkness was going up to Biorn's castle; and in vain did Rolf remind him that the snow was lying deep in the valleys, in vain did he suggest that the knight might be overtaken by his frightful dreams in the lonely mountains during the night-time. "Nothing can be worse to me than remaining here would be," replied Sintram.

He took his horse from the stable and rode forth in the gathering darkness. The noble steed slipped and stumbled and fell in the trackless ways, but his rider always raised him up, and urged him only more swiftly and eagerly towards the object which he longed and yet dreaded to reach. Nevertheless, he might never have arrived at it, had not his faithful hound Skovmark kept with him. The dog sought out the lost track for his beloved master, and invited him into it with joyous barkings, and warned him by his howls against precipices and treacherous

ice under the snow. Thus they arrived about midnight at Biorn's castle. The windows of the hall shone opposite to them with a brilliant light, as though some great feast were kept there, and confused sounds, as of singing, met their ears. Sintram gave his horse hastily to some retainers in the courtyard, and ran up the steps, whilst Skovmark stayed by the well-known horse.

A good esquire came towards Sintram within the castle, and said, "God be praised, my dear master, that you are come; for surely nothing good is going on above. But take heed to yourself also, and be not deluded. Your father has a guest with him, — and, as I think, a hateful one."

Sintram shuddered as he threw open the doors. A little man in the dress of a miner was sitting with his back towards him. The armor had been, for some time past, again ranged round the stone table, so that only two places were left empty. The seat opposite the door had been taken by Biorn of the Fiery Eyes; and the dazzling light of the torches fell upon his features with so red a flare, that he perfectly enacted that fearful surname.

"Father, whom have you here with you?" cried Sintram; and his suspicions rose to certainty as the miner turned round, and the detestable face of the little Master grinned from under his dark hood.

"Yes, just see, my fair son," said the wild Biorn; "thou hast not been here for a long while, and so to-night this jolly comrade has paid me a visit, and

thy place has been taken. But throw one of the suits of armor out of the way, and put a seat for thyself instead of it, and come and drink with us, and be merry."

"Yes, do so, Sir Sintram," said the little Master, with a laugh. "Nothing worse could come of it than that the broken pieces of armor might clatter somewhat strangely together, or at most that the disturbed spirit of him to whom the suit belonged might look over your shoulder; but he would not drink up any of our wine — ghosts have nothing to do with that. So now fall to!"

Biorn joined in the laughter of the hideous stranger with wild mirth; and while Sintram was mustering up his whole strength not to lose his senses at so terrible words, and was fixing a calm, steady look on the little Master's face, the old man cried out, "Why dost thou look at him so? Does it seem to thee as though thou sawest thyself in a mirror? Now that you are together, I do not see it so much; but a while ago I thought that you were like enough to each other to be mistaken."

"God forbid!" said Sintram, walking up close to the fearful apparition: "I command thee, detestable stranger, to depart from this castle, in right of my authority as my father's heir, as a consecrated knight and as a spirit!"

Biorn seemed as if he wished to oppose himself to this command with all his savage might. The little Master muttered to himself, "Thou art not, by

any means, the master in this house, pious knight; thou hast never lighted a fire on this hearth." Then Sintram drew the sword which Gabrielle had given him, held the cross of the hilt before the eyes of his evil guest, and said calmly, but with a powerful voice, "Worship, or fly!" And he fled, the frightful stranger, — he fled with such lightning speed, that it could scarcely be seen whether he had sprung through the window or the door. But in going he overthrew some of the armor, the tapers went out, and it seemed that the pale blue flame which lighted up the hall in a marvelous manner gave a fulfillment to the little Master's former words: and that the spirits of those to whom the armor had belonged were leaning over the table, grinning fearfully.

Both the father and the son were filled with horror, but each chose an opposite way to save himself. Biorn wished to have his hateful guest back again; and the power of his will was seen when the little Master's step resounded anew on the stairs, and his brown, shriveled hand shook the lock of the door. On the other hand, Sintram ceased not to say within himself, "We are lost, if he come back! We are lost to all eternity, if he come back!" And he fell on his knees, and prayed fervently from his troubled heart to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Then the little Master left the door, and again Biorn willed him to return, and again Sintram's prayers drove him away. So went on this strife of wills throughout the long night; and howling whirlwinds raged

the while around the castle, till all the household thought the end of the world was come. At length the dawn of morning appeared through the windows of the hall, — the fury of the storm was lulled, — Biorn sank back powerless in slumber on his seat, — peace and hope came to the inmates of the castle, — and Sintram, pale and exhausted, went out to breathe the dewy air of the mild winter's morning before the castle-gates.

CHAPTER XXVI.

The faithful Skovmark followed his master, caressing him; and when Sintram fell asleep on a stone seat in the wall, he lay at his feet, keeping watchful guard. Suddenly he pricked up his ears, looked round with delight, and bounded joyfully down the mountain. Just afterwards the chaplain of Drontheim appeared amongst the rocks, and the good beast went up to him, as if to greet him, and then again ran back to the knight to announce the welcome visitor.

Sintram opened his eyes, as a child whose Christmas-gifts have been placed at his bedside. For the chaplain smiled at him as he had never yet seen him smile. There was in it a token of victory and blessing, or at least of the near approach of both. "Thou hast done much yesterday, very much," said the holy priest; and his hands were joined, and his eyes full of bright tears. "I praise God for thee, my noble knight. Verena knows all, and she too praises God for thee. I do indeed now dare hope that the time will soon come when thou mayst appear before her. But Sintram, Sir Sintram, there is need of haste; for the old man above requires speedy aid, and thou

hast still a heavy — as I hope, the last — yet a most heavy trial to undergo for his sake. Arm thyself, my knight, arm thyself even with bodily weapons. In truth, this time only spiritual armor is needed, but it always befits a knight, as well as a monk, to wear in decisive moments the entire solemn garb of his station. If it so please thee, we will go directly to Drontheim together. Thou must return thence to-night. Such is a part of the hidden decree, which has been dimly unfolded to Verena's foresight. Here there is yet much that is wild and distracting, and thou hast great need to-day of calm preparation."

With humble joy Sintram bowed his assent, and called for his horse and for a suit of armor. "Only," added he, "let not any of that armor be brought which was last night overthrown in the hall!"

His orders were quickly obeyed. The arms which were fetched, adorned with fine engraved work, the simple helmet, formed rather like that of an esquire than a knight, the lance of almost gigantic size, which belonged to the suit — on all these the chaplain gazed in deep thought and with melancholy emotion. At last, when Sintram, with the help of his esquires, was well-nigh equipped, the holy priest spoke: —

"Wonderful providence of God! See, dear Sintram, this armor and this spear were formerly those of Sir Weigand the Slender, and with them he did many mighty deeds. When he was tended by your mother in the castle, and when even your father still

showed himself kind towards him, he asked, as a favor, that his armor and his lance should be allowed to hang in Biorn's armory, — Weigand himself, as you well know, intended to build a cloister and to live there as a monk, — and he put his old esquire's helmet with it, instead of another, because he was yet wearing that one when he first saw the fair Verena's angelic face. How wondrously does it now come to pass, that these very arms, which have so long been laid aside, should be brought to you for the decisive hour of your life! To me, as far as my short-sighted human wisdom can tell, — to me it seems truly a very solemn token, but one full of high and glorious promise."

Sintram stood now in complete array, composed and stately, and, from his tall, slender figure, might have been taken for a youth, had not the deep lines of care which furrowed his countenance shown him to be advanced in years.

"Who has placed boughs on the head of my war-horse?" asked Sintram of the esquires, with displeasure. "I am not a conqueror, nor a wedding-guest. And besides, there are no boughs now but those red and yellow crackling oak-leaves, dull and dead like the season itself."

"Sir Knight, I know not myself," answered an esquire; "but it seemed to me that it must be so."

"Let it be," said the chaplain. "I feel that this also comes as a token full of meaning from the right source."

Then the knight threw himself into his saddle; the priest went beside him; and they both rode slowly and silently towards Drontheim. The faithful dog followed his master. When the lofty castle of Drontheim appeared in sight, a gentle smile spread itself over Sintram's countenance, like sunshine over a wintry valley.

"God has done great things for me," said he. "I once rushed from here, a fearfully wild boy; I now come back a penitent man. I trust that it will yet go well with my poor troubled life."

The chaplain assented kindly, and soon afterwards the travellers passed under the echoing vaulted gateway into the castle-yard. At a sign from the priest, the retainers approached with respectful haste, and took charge of the horse; then he and Sintram went through long winding passages and up many steps to the remote chamber which the chaplain had chosen for himself; far away from the noise of men, and near to the clouds and the stars. There the two passed a quiet day in devout prayer, and earnest reading of Holy Scripture.

When the evening began to close in, the chaplain arose and said: "And now, my knight, get ready thy horse, and mount and ride back again to thy father's castle. A toilsome way lies before thee, and I dare not go with you. But I can and will call upon the Lord for you all through the long fearful night. O beloved instrument of the Most High, thou wilt yet not be lost!"

Thrilling with strange forebodings, but nevertheless strong and vigorous in spirit, Sintram did according to the holy man's desire. The sun set as the knight approached a long valley, strangely shut in by rocks, through which lay the road to his father's castle.

CHAPTER XXVII.

BEFORE entering the rocky pass, the knight, with a prayer and thanksgiving, looked back once more at the castle of Drontheim. There it was, so vast and quiet and peaceful; the bright windows of the chaplain's high chamber yet lighted up by the last gleam of the sun, which had already disappeared. In front of Sintram was the gloomy valley, as if his grave. Then there came towards him some one riding on a small horse; and Skovmark, who had gone up to the stranger as if to find out who he was, now ran back with his tail between his legs and his ears put back, howling and whining, and crept, terrified, under his master's war-horse. But even the noble steed appeared to have forgotten his once so fearless and warlike ardor. He trembled violently, and when the knight would have turned him towards the stranger, he reared and snorted and plunged, and began to throw himself backwards. It was only with difficulty that Sintram's strength and horsemanship got the better of him; and he was all white with foam when Sintram came up to the unknown traveller.

"You have cowardly beasts with you," said the latter, in a low, smothered voice.

Sintram was unable, in the ever-increasing darkness, rightly to distinguish what kind of being he saw before him; only a very pallid face, which at first he had thought was covered with freshly fallen snow, met his eyes from amidst the long, hanging garments. It seemed that the stranger carried a small box wrapped up; his little horse, as if wearied out, bent his head down towards the ground, whereby a bell, which hung from the wretched torn bridle under his neck, was made to give a strange sound. After a short silence, Sintram replied: "Noble steeds avoid those of a worse race, because they are ashamed of them; and the boldest dogs are attacked by a secret terror at sight of forms to which they are not accustomed. I have no cowardly beasts with me."

"Good, sir knight; then ride with me through the valley."

"I am going through the valley, but I want no companions."

"But perhaps I want one. Do you not see that I am unarmed? And at this season, at this hour, there are frightful, unearthly beasts about."

Just then, as though to confirm the awful words of the stranger, a thing swung itself down from one of the nearest trees, covered with hoar-frost, — no one could say if it were a snake or a lizard, — it curled and twisted itself, and appeared about to slide down upon the knight or his companion. Sintram leveled his spear, and pierced the creature

through. But, with the most hideous contortions, it fixed itself firmly on the spear-head; and in vain did the knight endeavor to rub it off against the rocks or the trees. Then he let his spear rest upon his right shoulder, with the point behind him, so that the horrible beast no longer met his sight; and he said, with good courage, to the stranger, "It does seem, indeed, that I could help you, and I am not forbidden to have an unknown stranger in my company; so let us push on bravely into the valley!"

"Help!" so resounded the solemn answer; "not help. I perhaps may help thee. But God have mercy upon thee if the time should ever come when I could no longer help thee. Then thou wouldst be lost, and I should become very frightful to thee. But we will go through the valley — I have thy knightly word for it. Come!"

They rode forward; Sintram's horse still showing signs of fear, the faithful dog still whining; but both obedient to their master's will. The knight was calm and steadfast. The snow had slipped down from the smooth rocks, and by the light of the rising moon could be seen various strange twisted shapes on their sides, some looking like snakes, and some like human faces; but they were only formed by the veins in the rock and the half-bare roots of trees, which had planted themselves in that desert place with capricious firmness. High above and at a great distance, the castle of Drontheim, as if to take leave, appeared again through an opening in the rocks.

The knight then looked keenly at his companion, and he almost felt as if Weigand the Slender were riding beside him.

"In God's name," cried he, "art thou not the shade of that departed knight who suffered and died for Verena?"

"I have not suffered, I have not died; but ye suffer, and ye die, poor mortals!" murmured the stranger. "I am not Weigand. I am that other, who was so like him, and whom thou hast also met before now in the wood."

Sintram strove to free himself from the terror which came over him at these words. He looked at his horse; it appeared to him entirely altered. The dry, many-colored oak-leaves on its head were waving like the flames around a sacrifice, in the uncertain moonlight. He looked down again, to see after his faithful Skovmark. Fear had likewise most wondrously changed him. On the ground in the middle of the road were lying dead men's bones, and hideous lizards were crawling about; and, in defiance of the wintry season, poisonous mushrooms were growing up all around.

"Can this be still my horse on which I am riding?" said the knight to himself, in a low voice; "and can that trembling beast which runs at my side be my dog?"

Then some one called after him, in a yelling voice, "Stop! stop! Take me also with you!"

Looking round, Sintram perceived a small, fright-

ful figure with horns, and a face partly like a wild boar and partly like a bear, walking along on its hind-legs, which were those of a horse; and in its hand was a strange, hideous weapon, shaped like a hook or a sickle. It was the being who had been wont to trouble him in his dreams; and, alas! it was also the wretched little Master himself, who, laughing wildly, stretched out a long claw towards the knight.

The bewildered Sintram murmured, "I must have fallen asleep; and now my dreams are coming over me!"

"Thou art awake," replied the rider of the little horse, "but thou knowest me also in thy dreams. For, behold! I am Death." And his garments fell from him, and there appeared a mouldering skeleton, its ghastly head crowned with serpents; that which he had kept hidden under his mantle was an hour-glass with the sand almost run out. Death held it towards the knight in his fleshless hand. The bell at the neck of the little horse gave forth a solemn sound. It was a passing bell.

"Lord, into Thy hands I commend my spirit!" prayed Sintram; and full of earnest devotion he rode after Death, who beckoned him on.

"He has thee not yet! He has thee not yet!" screamed the fearful fiend. "Give thyself up to me rather. In one instant, — for swift are thy thoughts, swift is my might, — in one instant thou shalt be in Normandy. Helen yet blooms in beauty as when she departed hence, and this very night she would

be thine." And once again he began his unholy praises of Gabrielle's loveliness, and Sintram's heart glowed like wild-fire in his weak breast.

Death said nothing more, but raised the hour-glass in his right hand yet higher and higher; and as the sand now ran out more quickly, a soft light streamed from the glass over Sintram's countenance, and then it seemed to him as if eternity in all its calm majesty were rising before him, and a world of confusion dragging him back with a deadly grasp.

"I command thee, wild form that followest me," cried he, — "I command thee, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to cease from thy seducing words, and to call thyself by that name by which thou art recorded in Holy Writ!"

A name, more fearful than a thunderclap, burst despairingly from the lips of the Tempter, and he disappeared.

"He will return no more," said Death in a kindly tone.

"And now I am become wholly thine, my stern companion?"

"Not yet, my Sintram. I shall not come to thee till many, many years are past. But thou must not forget me the while."

"I will keep the thought of thee steadily before my soul, thou fearful yet wholesome monitor, thou awful yet loving guide!"

"Oh! I can truly appear very gentle."

And so it proved indeed. His form became more

softly defined in the increasing gleam of light which shone from the hour-glass; the features, which had been awful in their sternness, wore a gentle smile; the crown of serpents became a bright palm-wreath; instead of the horse appeared a white misty cloud in the moonlight; and the bell gave forth sounds as of sweet lullabies. Sintram thought he could hear these words amidst them: —

> "The world and Satan are o'ercome;
> Before thee gleams eternal light,
> Warrior, who hast won the strife:
> Save from darkest shades of night
> Him before whose aged eyes
> All my terrors soon shall rise."

The knight well knew that his father was meant; and he urged on his noble steed, which now obeyed his master willingly and gladly, and the faithful dog also again ran beside him fearlessly. Death had disappeared; but in front of Sintram there floated a bright morning cloud, which continued visible after the sun had risen clear and warm in the bright winter sky.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"He is dead! the horrors of that fearful stormy night have killed him!" Thus said, about this time, some of Biorn's retainers, who had not been able to bring him back to his senses since the morning of the day before: they had made a couch of wolf and bear skins for him in the great hall, in the midst of the armor which still lay scattered around. One of the esquires said with a low sigh: "The Lord have mercy on his poor wild soul!"

Just then the warder blew his horn from his tower, and a trooper came into the room with a look of surprise. "A knight is coming hither," said he; "a wonderful knight. I could have taken him for our Lord Sintram; but a bright, bright morning cloud floats so close before him, and throws over him such clear light, that one could fancy red flowers were showered down upon him. Besides, his horse has a wreath of red leaves on his head, which was never a custom of the son of our dead lord."

"Just such a one," replied another, "I wove for him yesterday. He was not pleased with it at first, but afterwards he let it remain."

"But why didst thou that?"

"It seemed to me as if I heard a voice singing again and again in my ear: 'Victory! victory! the noblest victory! The knight rides forth to victory!' And then I saw a branch of our oldest oak-tree stretched towards me, which had kept on almost all its red and yellow leaves in spite of the snow. So I did according to what I had heard sung; and I plucked some of the leaves, and wove a triumphal wreath for the noble war-horse. At the same time Skovmark, — you know that the faithful beast had always a great dislike to Biorn, and therefore had gone to the stable with the horse, — Skovmark jumped upon me, fawning, and seemed pleased, as if he wanted to thank me for my work; and such noble animals understand well about good prognostics."

They heard the sound of Sintram's spurs on the stone steps, and Skovmark's joyous bark. At that instant the supposed corpse of old Biorn sat up, looked around with rolling, staring eyes, and asked of the terrified retainers in a hollow voice, "Who comes there, ye people? who comes there? I know it is my son. But who comes with him? The answer to that bears the sword of decision in its mouth. For see, good people, Gotthard and Rudlieb have prayed much for me; yet if the little Master come with him, I am lost in spite of them."

"Thou art not lost, my beloved father!" Sintram's kind voice was heard to say, as he softly opened the door, and the bright red morning cloud floated in with him.

Biorn joined his hands, cast a look of thankfulness up to heaven, and said, smiling, "Yes, praised be God! it is the right companion! It is sweet gentle Death!" And then he made a sign to his son to approach, saying, "Come here, my deliverer; come, blessed of the Lord, that I may relate to thee all that has passed within me."

As Sintram now sat close by his father's couch, all who were in the room perceived a remarkable and striking change. For old Biorn, whose whole countenance, and not his eyes alone, had been wont to have a fiery aspect, was now quite pale, almost like white marble; while, on the other hand, the cheeks of the once deadly pale Sintram glowed with a bright bloom like that of early youth. It was caused by the morning cloud which still shone upon him, whose presence in the room was rather felt than seen; but it produced a gentle thrill in every heart.

"See, my son," began the old man, softly and mildly, "I have lain for a long time in a death-like sleep, and have known nothing of what was going on around me; but within — ah! within, I have known but too much! I thought that my soul would be destroyed by the eternal anguish; and yet again I felt, with much greater horror, that my soul was eternal like that anguish. Beloved son, thy cheeks that glowed so brightly are beginning to grow pale at my words. I refrain from more. But let me relate to you something more cheering. Far, far away,

I could see a bright lofty church, where Gotthard and Rudlieb Lenz were kneeling and praying for me. Gotthard had grown very old, and looked almost like one of our mountains covered with snow, on which the sun, in the lovely evening hours, is shining; and Rudlieb was also an elderly man, but very vigorous and very strong; and they both, with all their strength and vigor, were calling upon God to aid me, their enemy. Then I heard a voice like that of an angel, saying: 'His son does the most for him! He must this night wrestle with Death and with the fallen one! His victory will be victory, and his defeat will be defeat, for the old man and himself.' Thereupon I awoke; and I knew that all depended upon whom thou wouldst bring with thee. Thou hast conquered. Next to God, the praise be to thee!"

"Gotthard and Rudlieb have helped much," replied Sintram; "and, beloved father, so have the fervent prayers of the chaplain of Drontheim. I felt, when struggling with temptation and deadly fear, how the heavenly breath of holy men floated round me and aided me."

"I am most willing to believe that, my noble son, and everything thou sayest to me," answered the old man; and at the same moment the chaplain also coming in, Biorn stretched out his hand towards him with a smile of peace and joy. And now all seemed to be surrounded with a bright circle of unity and blessedness. "But see," said old Biorn, "how the

faithful Skovmark jumps upon me now, and tries to caress me. It is not long since he used always to howl with terror when he saw me."

"My dear lord," said the chaplain, "there is a spirit dwelling in good beasts, though dreamy and unconscious."

As the day wore on, the stillness in the hall increased. The last hour of the aged knight was drawing near, but he met it calmly and fearlessly. The chaplain and Sintram prayed beside his couch. The retainers knelt devoutly around. At length the dying man said: "Is that the prayer-bell in Verena's cloister?" Sintram's looks said yea; while warm tears fell on the colorless cheeks of his father. A gleam shone in the old man's eyes, the morning cloud stood close over him, and then the gleam, the morning cloud, and life with them, departed from him.

CHAPTER XXIX.

A FEW days afterwards Sintram stood in the parlor of the convent, and waited with a beating heart for his mother to appear. He had seen her for the last time when, a slumbering child, he had been awakened by her warm farewell kisses, and then had fallen asleep again, to wonder in his dream what his mother had wanted with him, and to seek her in vain the next morning in the castle and in the garden. The chaplain was now at his side, rejoicing in the chastened rapture of the knight, whose fierce spirit had been softened, on whose cheeks a light reflection of that solemn morning cloud yet lingered.

The inner doors opened. In her white veil, stately and noble, the lady Verena came forward, and with a heavenly smile she beckoned her son to approach the grating. There could be no thought here of any passionate outbreak, whether of sorrow or of joy.[1] The holy peace which had its abode within these walls would have found its way to a

[1] "In whose sweet presence sorrow dares not lower,
Nor expectation rise
Too high for earth." — *Christian Year.*

heart less tried and less purified than that which beat in Sintram's bosom. Shedding some placid tears, the son knelt before his mother, kissed her flowing garments through the grating, and felt as if in paradise, where every wish and every care is hushed. "Beloved mother," said he, "let me become a holy man, as thou art a holy woman. Then I will betake myself to the cloister yonder; and perhaps I might one day be deemed worthy to be thy confessor, if illness or the weakness of old age should keep the good chaplain within the castle of Drontheim."

"That would be a sweet, quietly-happy life, my good child," replied the lady Verena; "but such is not thy vocation. Thou must remain a bold, powerful knight, and thou must spend the long life, which is almost always granted to us children of the north, in succoring the weak, in keeping down the lawless, and in yet another more bright and honorable employment which I hitherto rather honor than know."

"God's will be done!" said the knight, and he rose up full of self-devotion and firmness.

"That is my good son," said the lady Verena. "Ah! how many sweet calm joys spring up for us! See already is our longing desire of meeting again satisfied, and thou wilt never more be so entirely estranged from me. Every week on this day thou wilt come back to me, and thou wilt relate what glorious deeds thou hast done, and take back with thee my advice and my blessing."

"Am I not once more a good and happy child!" cried Sintram joyously; "only that the merciful God has given me in addition the strength of a man in body and spirit. Oh, how blessed is that son to whom it is allowed to gladden his mother's heart with the blossoms and the fruit of his life!"

Thus he left the quiet cloister's shade, joyful in spirit and richly laden with blessings, to enter on his noble career. He was not content with going about wherever there might be a rightful cause to defend or evil to avert; the gates of the now hospitable castle stood always open also to receive and shelter every stranger; and old Rolf, who was almost grown young again at the sight of his lord's excellence, was established as seneschal. The winter of Sintram's life set in bright and glorious, and it was only at times that he would sigh within himself and say, "Ah, Montfaucon! ah, Gabrielle! if I could dare to hope that you have quite forgiven me!"

CHAPTER XXX.

The spring had come in its brightness to the northern lands, when one morning Sintram turned his horse homewards, after a successful encounter with one of the most formidable disturbers of the peace of his neighborhood. His horsemen rode after him, singing as they went. As they drew near the castle, they heard the sound of joyous notes wound on the horn. "Some welcome visitor must have arrived," said the knight; and he spurred his horse to a quicker pace over the dewy meadow. While still at some distance, they descried old Rolf, busily engaged in preparing a table for the morning meal, under the trees in front of the castle-gates. From all the turrets and battlements floated banners and flags in the fresh morning breeze: esquires were running to and fro in their gayest apparel. As soon as the good Rolf saw his master, he clapped his hands joyfully over his gray head, and hastened into the castle. Immediately the wide gates were thrown open; and Sintram, as he entered, was met by Rolf, whose eyes were filled with tears of joy while he pointed towards three noble forms that were following him.

Two men of high stature — one in extreme old age, the other gray-headed, and both remarkably alike — were leading between them a fair young boy, in a page's dress of blue velvet, richly embroidered with gold. The two old men wore the dark velvet dress of German burghers, and had massive gold chains and large shining medals hanging round their necks.

Sintram had never before seen his honored guests, and yet he felt as if they were well known and valued friends. The very aged man reminded him of his dying father's words about the snow-covered mountains lighted up by the evening sun; and then he remembered, he could scarcely tell how, that he had heard Folko say that one of the highest mountains of that sort in his southern land was called the St. Gotthard. And at the same time, he knew that the old but yet vigorous man on the other side was named Rudlieb. But the boy who stood between them; ah! Sintram's humility dared scarcely form a hope as to who he might be, however much his features, so noble and soft, called up two highly honored images before his mind.

Then the aged Gotthard Lenz, the king of old men, advanced with a solemn step, and said: "This is the noble boy Engeltram of Montfaucon, the only son of the great baron; and his father and mother send him to you, Sir Sintram, knowing well your holy and glorious knightly career, that you may bring him up to all the honorable and valiant deeds

of this northern land, and may make of him a Christian knight, like yourself."

Sintram threw himself from his horse. Engeltram of Montfaucon held the stirrup gracefully for him, checking the retainers, who pressed forward, with these words: "I am the noblest born esquire of this knight, and the service nearest to his person belongs to me."

Sintram knelt in silent prayer on the turf: then lifting up in his arms, towards the rising sun, the image of Folko and Gabrielle, he cried, "With the help of God, my Engeltram, thou wilt become glorious as that sun, and thy course will be like his!"

And old Rolf exclaimed, as he wept for joy, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace."

Gotthard Lenz and Rudlieb were pressed to Sintram's heart; the chaplain of Drontheim, who just then came from Verena's cloister to bring a joyful greeting to her brave son, stretched out his hands to bless them all.

THE END.

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